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THE TWO FRIENDS.

VOL. I.

Thos Thistlethwayte

THE TWO FRIENDS

A NOVEL.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.
1835.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

In acquiring a knowledge of the world, we are too apt to lose a knowledge of self.—Few, if any, ever perfectly understood both.

"You are late this morning, my dear Desbrow," said Lord Arlington, as he entered the dressing-room of his friend, who had not yet exchanged his robe de chambre for his morning toilette.—"How jaded you look; but no wonder, for I dare be sworn you have passed the night in the House of Commons."

"You are correct in your surmise," replied Mr. Desbrow, "I did not get away until six o'clock this morning, and had the mortification to find myself voting in a most discouraging minority, and to have lost sleep, breath, and time, for no purpose."

"You do not include the worst part of the penalty," said Lord Arlington, "the inhaling the pestiferous air of the most impure atmosphere in London, the effects of which are even now visible in your languid visage—chacun à son goût. I left Crockford's exactly at the same hour that you left St. Stephen's, having paired off with Welsford, and sought my pillow with the comfortable reflection of being a winner of three thousand pounds, which dame Fortune most opportunely sent me, when I was meditating the last resource of the destitute—a penitential letter to my father, or an application to a friend. For the Jews begin to look grave at my proposals—ungrateful rascals as they are—after my voting for their emancipa-

tion. Hang the dogs, I wish they would emancipate us."

"Will you never grow wise, Arlington?" asked his friend.

"Just the question I was about to put to you," replied Arlington. "I waste my money and time; you, your time and health; which then is the more unwise? I live in the world, and am of it; you pass through it, as on a forced march—your person in it, but your thoughts engaged in some Utopian speculation for bettering mankind: while the specimen of that genus, which ought, according to worldly wisdom, the most to interest and occupy you—namely, yourself, is left to chance, the very worst guardian a man can choose for his personal comfort."

"It is true," said Desbrow; "I think, perhaps, less of self, than do the generality of men. But, I claim little merit for this self-abnegation; as, with my views, enjoyment of life must spring from a consciousness of duties discharged, or,

at least, attempted to be discharged; and if personal gratification is alone to be made the guide of our actions, I fear few would attend to duties, as many, if not all of them are performed with some personal sacrifice."

"You will end by becoming a saint, my dear Desbrow," said Arlington, "but saint or sinner, I shall always love you, though, for my soul, I can't tell why, as no two creatures can be more unlike than we are. I wish I could get you to come to Crockford's of a night, and become one of us choice spirits."

"And I," returned Desbrow, "wish I could get you to wait for divisions at the House, and to go to Brooks's oftener than to White's; in short, to become one of us, I wont say choice spirits, but plodding spirits, who think more of country, than of self."

"When you shew me the good that results from your exertions," said Arlington, "I may be inclined to listen to your counsel; but, until then, I shall continue to amuse myself through

the journey of life, while you add to its tediousness by examining every obstruction in your path, for the sake, forsooth, of rendering it more easy to future generations. Now I, like the quaint reasoner, who preferred the *present* to the *future*, am inclined to ask what has posterity done for us? and the answer being 'Nothing,' I am disposed to treat it with equal disregard. Spare me, dear Desbrow, the lecture that your grave looks and ominous shake of the head indicate. I must be off, as I have ten thousand places to go to, and ten thousand things to do; so adieu—au revoir—we shall meet at the House, for I must shew myself there, and look out for a pair, as I dine with Ellesmere at eight, and would not miss being there for all the questions that have been, or will be, discussed this session."

"One word before you go," said Desbrow, "pray let me implore you to abandon play."

"What! was there ever such a Goth as to

make such a request, the morning after I have won three thousand?"

"Better to make it after you have won, than after you have lost," said Desbrow. "Remember, my dear Arlington, we are old friends: if you find yourself under any pecuniary embarrassments in which I can be of use, command me—readily, cheerfully will I assist you; but, I should be wanting in friendship, were I not to impress on your mind, that play will render the aid of friends useless, by drawing present distress and future ruin on you, if you continue to indulge in it. The pecuniary losses, which must ever be the certain result of play, great as are the embarrassments they lead to, are the least of the evils it entails. Gaming creates a moral torpedo, which palsies every noble and generous feeling in the heart of him who yields to it, rendering him reckless of his own future happiness, and callous with regard to that of those who depend on him for theirs. He who wins or loses thousands, becomes care-

less of hundreds; because he believes, with the credulity that ever appertains to the votaries of fortune, that she changes her smiles too frequently, not to visit him occasionally. The more he loses, the more he calculates on a reaction that will repay him his losses; and his expenses are incurred with a reference to his possible gains, but never to his possible losses; hence, heavy debts are added to the list of his troubles. *If he wins*, he continues to play, because it would be folly to abandon fortune when she is favourable; and if he loses, which, by some unaccountable (as he calls it) fatality, occurs much more frequently, he equally continues to gamble, because he has *lost too much* to leave off without trying to recover some part, and so plays until fortune and honour have left him for ever."

"By Jove, you have read me a rare lecture," said Arlington; "if Crocky heard it, he would think himself half ruined."

"Let us be serious for this once," said

Desbrow. "If you have debts, I can lend you sufficient to pay them; but promise me to play no more; do this, dear Arlington, as a proof of friendship."

"Well, well," said Arlington, "I will compromise with you, by giving my word of honour not to play for a year; will that content you?"

"I am satisfied," said Desbrow, shaking him by the hand; "and now recollect that I am your banker for the payment of all debts, and do not again mortify your father by letting him know that his last year's liberality has not redeemed or reclaimed you."

"You are a strange fellow, Desbrow," said Arlington, musingly. "Here you are ready to lend me thousands, with but a remote prospect of payment; and yet it was only yesterday that you denied yourself the two hunters that tempted you at Anderson's. I have still sufficient grace to appreciate this self-denial, though, alas! not to practise it; but among the set I

live with, it would be set down as a certain proof of your total want of *nous*—a want they can as rarely pardon as understand."

"And yet, Arlington, those are the people with whom you live. How can you associate, day after day, with such persons? Can you consider those as friends, who could only be useful as confederates?"

"Why no," replied Arlington, "I am not sufficiently stupid to consider them as friends, according to the real acceptation of the word. I call my associates at Crockford's 'les amis de hasard. I anticipate all you would say, Desbrow, and feel its justice. I know the worthlessness of my companions; and if I am indulgent to their heartlessness and gross selfishness, it is because I am conscious of my own sins, in at least that point. I sometimes think I am formed for better things, mais que voulez vous? I have fallen into a certain routine, from which I have not mental courage enough to disen-

tangle myself; and I vent my contempt of my own weakness, in satirical observations on those who have lured me into it. Now you, dear Desbrow,—forgive my candour,—might have saved me, had you been less Quixotic, less abstract in your theories; but the gulph between mere common-place sensualists, living only for themselves, and you, who live only for others, appeared too wide to be spanned by any arch that I could ever imagine; and so, I have remained on the terra ferma of positive clay, while you have soared into purer regions. Apathy is my bane; and is one of the worst moral diseases, because it incapacitates us from combatting the encroachments of vice, or of opening our souls to the approaches of virtue."

"Feeling this, my dear Arlington, can you still submit to abandon yourself to the vortex of dissipation and folly, in which you have been wasting all the best faculties of your mind?"

"Why, I have somewhere read," said the

insouciant Arlington, "that they who have not been scathed by vice, know not how to appreciate virtue, which, like health and wealth, are never fully valued,—until—lost. Now, I have bought my experience; and no one values goodness more than I do, though few practise it less."

"A truce to raillery, I beg," said Desbrow; let me entreat you to gratify me by consenting to give up your dinner at Ellesmere House to-day. I know there will be a division."

"Yes," said Arlington, "and we, as usual, shall find ourselves in an inglorious minority with the fag end of the liberals. Faugh! it makes me sick, to see our names mingled with those of men who owe their seats to reform, and whose presence offers the strongest argument against a measure that has opened Parliament to such ignorant pretenders."

"Ah! there is the old leaven of aristocratic prejudices peeping forth," said Desbrow: "you glory in the opinions which influence your

votes, but are ashamed of the company in which the votes are given. It reminds me of an Irish lady, who turned Protestant because there are no pews in the Catholic churches, and that all ranks are mingled together without respect to persons. How, with such feeling, shall you aristocrats support the notion of the equality of the grave, the unceremonious contact of vulgar clay, and the impartial preference of the worm, who leaves some high-born lord or lady to banquet on some ignoble peasant."

"Spare me such hideous pictures," said Arlington; "really, Desbrow, you are too bad; but to reply to you in your own style, if we are condemned to mingle our fine porcelain with the vile pottery of vulgar earth in the grave, it is no reason that we should mix it while we have the power of selection. But you have entrapped me into a discussion on the future, when I have a thousand rare projects for the present. I cannot give up the dinner at Ellesmere House. Lady Walmer is to be

there, and I would not miss meeting her for—no—not even for your best commendations, my dear Desbrow, though I do value them.—So adieu."

"Stay one moment," said Desbrow, laying his hand on the arm of his friend, "I have known you to be imprudent, unthinking – a gamester; but I believed not that you could harbour, and unblushingly avow, an attachment to a married woman, and *that* woman the wife of one friend, and the sister of another. This is dreadful."

"I am not aware," said Arlington, coldly, "that I have avowed an attachment; but if I did, I see nothing so very dreadful, as you are pleased to call it, in the affair. Lady Walmer is certainly the wife and sister of two men who are my friends; how the deuce else, should I have gained admittance, on such a familiar footing, in the house; and consequently, how should I have had opportunities of knowing and liking her, or of making her like me.

People are blamed for betrayals of friendship in such cases; but I say that it is the friendship that betrays, by giving the opportunities for such betrayals."

"This, is mere sophistry, Arlington, and unworthy of you," said Desbrow. "I cannot, will not, allow myself to think that you are capable of the conduct I reprehend. No, unthinking as you are, you have too good a heart to wish to destroy the happiness of a family who have treated you with confidence and friendship."

An observer might have noticed the heightened colour and embarrassed air of Arlington, as his friend, in the warmth of his feelings, shook him cordially by the hand, repeating again that he disbelieved him capable of such selfishness and deception.

CHAPTER II.

"We are often ashamed of our friends, when it is they who have cause to be ashamed of us."

LORD ARLINGTON was right when he observed that no two persons could be more unlike than he and his friend, yet a very sincere friendship subsisted between them; a friendship that might have given Desbrow as much power as he had inclination, to draw Arlington away from the futile society and pursuits which were enfeebling his mental powers, and hardening his heart, but that, unfortunately, the former's uncompromising severity of morals was accompa-

nied by a devotion to liberalism in politics, that often led him into positions which exposed him to the ridicule of his opponents. The "world's dread laugh," which had, on more than one occasion, followed a speech of his, uniting the elevated moral code of a Plato, with the enthusiasm and fire of a Mirabeau, had alarmed the more worldly mind of Arlington, who shrank back affrighted from the influence that Desbrow had hitherto exercised over his opinions; and the sarcastic mockery with which he had heard his name assailed at the clubs, though it failed to lessen his friendship, had the effect of decreasing his respect for Desbrow, until, by degrees, he had grown to think him a mere visionary, more likely to injure than advance any cause he espoused, and whose counsel it would be weakness to follow.

Lord Arlington was the only son of the Marquis of Heatherfield, a nobleman of the old school, as remarkable for high principles, as for high breeding, and as strictly honourable in

practice as in theory. He was not like too many of our modern men of high station, who would resent the slightest imputation on their honour, yet commit actions which proved, that while they worshipped the shadow, they were careless of the substance. Courage with him was something more than an impulse depending on mere physical force, or adopted with reference to conventional opinions. He had not the courage, so common in our days, of tergiversation in his politics; he had not one opinion when his party was *in*, and another when *out* of office, on the plea of expediency; he could not sell a friend or foe, an unsound horse, or give an insincere opinion; he could not overreach a simpleton, or compete with a rogue; in short, he was an old-fashioned gentleman, as gentlemen ought ever to be, and one of the admirable specimens that England can still boast, which proves that noblemen and gentlemen may be considered synonymous terms. He had horses on the turf, because he thought it incumbent

on persons of his station and fortune, to encourage the breed of horses; but he was never seen to come in contact with blacklegs or jockeys; he lost regularly at every Newmarket meeting, to the surprise of no one but himself, as he continued to pursue the same unsophisticated system in betting that he had been initiated into forty years before, and consoled himself for his losses, by seeing only the most distinguished names in his betting-book. Arlington once ventured to insinuate to him, that his repeated defeats on the turf were to be attributed to his disdaining to practise the stratagems, or to take advantage of the information to be acquired from certain persons, whose *extraordinary* sagacity in such matters no one questioned, and of which few failed to avail themselves when opportunity offered; nay, he hinted that many of the noble names who figured on the creditor side of his father's book, were more than suspected of a prescience with regard to winning horses, that *mere* experience could

not furnish; but the air of offended dignity, with which the venerable nobleman repelled the suspicion, so degrading to "his order," precluded his recurring to it, except at the risk of offending him, which Arlington was by no means willing to do, as he was much attached to his father. His associates at the clubs, failed not to animadvert on the patriarchal simplicity, as they termed it, of Lord Heatherfield; or to take advantage of it, by backing horses against the favourite horse, which his lordship—an admirable judge of horseflesh—thought certain of winning. Many were the pleasantries passed at the hazard table at Crockford's, on the facility of securing hundreds by betting against him; nay, some went so far as to advise Arlington to keep the money in the family, by offering his father the long odds against all his favourites: but the gravity with which the counsel was received, prevented its being renewed; as, however he might regret the large and repeated losses of Lord Heather-

field, he was little disposed to permit any jokes at his parent's expense—at least in his presence.

Though young in years, Arlington was old in experience; he had not passed five seasons in the artificial atmosphere of London, without having experienced its chilling influence on the affections, and its petrifying power on the opinions which threatened to become fixed in the cold rigidity of unbending selfishness; yet, there were moments when the natural warmth and goodness of his nature, triumphed over his acquired egotism, and left him open to better feelings. In such moments, he turned from the venal herd with which he associated, to that honourable and high-minded father, or to his generous and single-hearted, though eccentric friend, Desbrow, and sought in their society a relief from the apathetic torpor that was growing on him. But exploded maxims and Quixotic sentiments from the one, and exaggerated opinions and Utopian systems of impracticable perfectibility from the other, dis-

couraged his advances, and he fell again into the gay but heartless circle; where an epigram, a sarcasm, or a bon mot, launched with unerring aim against all that is most respectable, never failed to turn the laugh against it, and to win for the authors that applause which silences dissenters and gains partisans.

Worldly wisdom was considered the science most necessary to be acquired in Arlington's set; but their definition of the term was so widely apart from the general acceptation of it in other circles, that an adept in the science at Crockford's, would be considered as little short of a madman, among the wise men of the east—of Temple Bar. For the *rich*, to stake thousands on the chance of winning, and the *poor*, to risk as much on a similar hazard, but with the advantage of being unable to pay, is a common every-night occurrence in the gilded saloons of St. James's Street; but to know *how* to calculate the odds, when to back a caster, *in* or *out*, requires that peculiar worldly

wisdom, which can only be gained by a frequent attendance at a place that may not be named to "ears polite," and whence, contrary to the old received opinion, the presence of its nightly visitors, at all the places of fashionable resort, proves that there *is* a redemption.

Arlington had, like all his associates, won some hundreds, and lost some thousands, still he believed himself not only a lucky but a scientific player. Whether he was the last, we will not stop to enquire, but that, on the whole, he might be considered the former, we are ready to admit; as he had, for five seasons, persevered in putting his luck to the proof, and was *not* yet ruined; having only exhausted one year's income, and anticipated another, independent of some thousands paid for him by his liberal father.

Arlington's days passed in a round of vapid amusement, that filled up his time, but failed to afford him any rational enjoyment; a latent feeling frequently reminded him that he was

formed for better things, and there were moments when he turned away disgusted, if not sated, from the routine of empty pleasures, into whose vortex he had plunged; but habit, that giant who enslaves even more than did the fabled giants of old, still held him in its chains: and though he had learnt by experience that pleasure is not happiness, he continued to act as if he knew not the distinction, mentally promising himself, that *some day* or *other* (that indefinite epoch, referred to by all who meditate amendment) he would shake off the inglorious thraldom of fashion, and live a different life.

Desbrow was of a different character from Arlington, and his pursuits rendered the difference still more apparent. Left an orphan at an early age, and heir to a very large fortune, he had been sent to a perparatory school when only six years old, and there the first impression of friendship was stamped on his ductile heart by Arlington, a

lively affectionate boy of his own age, who returned it with all the warmth of childhood. From this private school they were sent, nearly at the same age, to Eton, where the friendship, commenced in infancy, "grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength." But even at this early period, each had discovered that his friend was not exactly like himself, and the discovery often gave pain. Desbrow was never so happy as when, during the play hours, he devoured, rather than read, some abridged history or romance; and his chest would expand, his cheeks glow, and his eyes flash, as some trait of heroic courage, or noble self-devotion, was brought before him on the page. He would peruse it aloud, and with enthusiasm, turn to grasp the hand of Arlington, and claim his sympathy; but Arlington's approbation was so cold and measured, in comparison with *his* feelings, that Desbrow, disconcerted and chilled, could not, at such moments, but grieve that his friend felt not as

he did. Arlington, on his side, thought that the time allotted for recreation might be much better employed than in reading; yet, he often remained with Desbrow, because he enjoyed not play without him, though his thoughts all the time were in the play-ground.

Notwithstanding that the abstraction of Desbrow produced some wonder and occasional sneers from his juvenile companions, his abilities, generosity, and high courage, had won their esteem.

Amongst them he was a sort of privileged person, whose eccentricities, if they repelled familiarity, precluded not respect; but Arlington was the most popular boy at Eton, and used his popularity, as it is but too generally used, as a means of attaining his own object, which was simply amusement, Desbrow being the only person who resisted his daily devised plans of pleasure, though the only person whose companionship in them, he condescended to solicit.

The dissimilarity of their tastes and pursuits chilled not the attachment that united them. Desbrow had often extricated his friend from pecuniary embarrassments, brought on by extravagance, though his allowance was considerably less than that of Arlington: and, at such moments, the latter felt that to the self-denial of Desbrow he owed his escape from the mortifying necessity of appealing to a father, whose liberality ought to have prevented his son from being driven to such expedients. Prudent resolutions always followed such reflections, but they faded away before the first temptation that assailed them: and the youths left Eton for Cambridge nearly at the same time, with no feeling in common save that of friendship.

Desbrow's guardian, Mr. Beaumont, a near relative, of large fortune and misanthropic habits, was the most unfit person to whom he could be confided. His vacations were spent with him; and the baleful influence his dogmatical theories acquired over the mind of his ward, was evident when he returned from

his visits, by an increased seclusion, and a more unbending adherence to his own opinions. Mr. Beaumont, in his youth, had been jilted by a young lady, to whom he was passionately attached, and of whose affection he thought himself secure. Of a naturally morose turn of mind, this disappointment soured his nature, and he visited on the whole sex, nay, on all the world, the dislike that the inconstancy of the lady, had engendered towards his species. To the aristocracy he indulged a hatred that he missed no opportunity of betraying. This feeling had its source in the circumstances, that she who had deceived, and the rival who had supplanted him, both belonged to that class: and this hatred influenced his conduct, long after he had ceased to reflect on its original cause. With a strong bias to Tory politics, he became a violent liberal, for the sole purpose, as he declared, of assisting to humble the proud aristocrats; and supported many a measure in direct violation of his judgment, to further this desired end. How many of the most intempe-

rate politicians, of all parties, have been led by equally futile causes, originating in selfish disappointments or personal piques? How many pseudo patriots has the refusal of a minister made? and how many ultra Tories have sprung into life from similar reasons? Mr. Beaumont had talked to Desbrow of the pride, heartlessness, and selfishness of the aristocracy, as if such defects were peculiar to that class, and not appertaining to the whole mass of mankind; and the ductile mind of his ward had received the impression, ere reason or experience had enabled him to refute the injurious fallacy.

Thus, he learned to look with suspicion on those with whom his station in life had cast him, and was ready to advocate any measure that tended to elevate the classes which he was led to consider their opponents. At Cambridge the exclusiveness of a few of the scions of nobility, still farther increased Desbrow's preconceived dislike to them; and fixed in him prejudices that, if not impossible to be eradicated, were at least difficult to be conquered.

CHAPTER III.

"Dans un salon, l'enthousiasme est de mauvais goût, il fait dissonance avec le ton froidement poli qui est d'etiquette, comme des gants glacés; à la tribune national, l'éloquence est une conversation, les mains dans les poches; et si Mirabeau ressucité y apparaissait avec les foudres de sa voix, et les passions fougueuses de sa dialéctique, les centres lui riraient au nez, et le président le rappellerait à l'ordre."

A VISIT made at Heatherfield Castle, and an intimacy formed with its noble owner, did more towards correcting the false impressions of Desbrow, than all the intercourse he had yet had with the aristocracy. The genuine nobleness, candour, and dignified simplicity of Lord Heatherfield, soon made themselves felt, and were as soon appreciated by Desbrow; who

quickly learned to respect even the prejudices of the venerable nobleman, intermingled as they were with so many virtues and estimable qualities. Lord Heatherfield, on his side, formed a high estimation of his son's friend; in truth, notwithstanding the difference of their political opinions, as well as ages, the characters of the two approximated much more closely than did that of either with Arlington's; for there was a certain degree of enthusiasm in both, which found a chord that vibrated in the heart of the other.

If Desbrow learned to think better of the aristocracy, from his intimacy with one of the most excellent of its members, Lord Heatherfield was taught to judge more leniently the classes who had found so warm and high-minded a defender in Desbrow. The prejudices of both yielded to the salutary effects produced by witnessing the admirable qualities of each other, and having arrived at esteem, they soon began to respect their hitherto severely-judged oppo-

nents,—the first and great step towards that most desirable stage in the march of intellect—conciliation. How many kind hearts and congenial natures are kept apart by political prejudices; hearts and natures, that, if known to each other, might have broken down the hitherto impregnable fortresses and ramparts of prejudice that divided them. But when will men cease to be governed by the tyrant Prejudice, who, like all tyrants, is only powerful in the weakness of his victims. Does not death, sickness, and sorrow, with all the other thousand ills to which men are heirs, furnish sufficient causes for embittering this mortal pilgrimage without the heart-burnings, estrangements, and discords, to which the indulgence of prejudices gives birth? Alas! it is from our own failings that our most frequent, if not most painful, trials arise! and by giving way to passion and prejudice, we deprive ourselves of many consolations which the sympathy and kindness of congenial minds might afford us.

But to return to our story. After each visit to Heatherfield Castle, Mr. Beaumont discovered that his ward joined with less animation in his strictures against the aristocracy; nay, that he not unfrequently dissented from the unqualified censures with which he assailed them, even though Desbrow was more disposed to make exceptions against the sweeping anathema, than to defend the whole order from its fury. Mr. Beaumont attributed this change in his ward's feelings to his friendship for Lord Heatherfield and Arlington, and often taunted him, on the subject of the father's weakness and prejudice, and the son's sybarite love of pleasure, unconscious that he himself was giving way to much more blameable prejudices, while unjustly decrying Lord Heatherfield.

"You will end," would the old man say to his ward, "by being,—I won't say elevated, but degraded, to the peerage, which will be the price paid for the relinquishment of your independence of opinion. I see it all: that old

courtier and his unprincipled son have made an apostate of you."

"Pardon me, my dear Mr. Beaumont," would Desbrow reply, "but you quite mistake the character of the Marquis of Heatherfield and that of his son."

"What! you would persuade me that the father is not a pompous, ceremonious, prosing nobleman of the *old school;* and the son, a thoughtless, unprincipled, selfish voluptuary of the new?" asked the cynical guardian. "No, no; *I* know better than that; *I* am not to be cajoled, though you may be. I know the aristocracy well,—too well,—and equally despise the feudal tyrants of the old regime, as the selfish epicureans of the new. Both are the drones, yes, Desbrow, the useless drones, that consume the honey of the constitutional hive, to the detriment of the useful bees."

"But surely, sir, you must admit that the Marquis of Heatherfield, who has never held place or pension, cannot be called a drone."

"He would have been glad to have held both, if he could," interrupted Mr. Beaumont; and would, if the labourer had been found worthy of his hire."

"Really, sir, you must excuse my dissenting from your opinions," replied Desbrow. "I think highly of the Marquis of Heatherfield; and as to my friend Arlington, I cannot admit that he is either unprincipled or selfish."

"The devil you don't," asked Mr. Beaumont, angrily. "What! then, it is not unprincipled or selfish to spend double the profuse allowance given him by his father; to vex and harass that too indulgent father by incurring enormous debts; and then to have recourse to the first easy dupe of a friend he encounters, to enable him to pursue the same system? This," continued the old man, "in middle, or low life, would be considered unprincipled and selfish; but when the brows of the actor are encircled with a coronet, it appears that it ceases to be either."

To such arguments, Desbrow found it difficult to reply. He could not defend Arlington; but he liked him too well to abandon him to the severe animadversions of his guardian, without, at least, giving him credit for the many good qualities which he knew he possessed, the recapitulation of which, only served to draw forth sundry ill-natured comments.

"He may well be generous," would the old man say, "if he finds a foolish father, and a thoughtless friend, to administer to his prodigality; he may well be good-tempered, if all pecuniary annoyance is saved him, by want of principle or feeling to be wounded by them; and he may well be ready to sacrifice a little to those who sacrifice so much to him."

Both the young men left Cambridge with academical honours, and the general esteem of all who knew them. Arlington had excited a more lively interest amongst his companions, from the hilarity and sociability of his disposition; but Desbrow left an impression on the

learned professors that he was a person formed to make a sensation in public life, provided he conquered the bias to eccentricity that was visible in his character. Both the friends were returned members for Parliament soon after they had completed their majority; both were at first considered as staunch supporters of the administration then in power. Desbrow, however, soon declared himself that political paradox so seldom to be met with—"an independent member," which was defined to mean a member that could not be depended upon; and, as is usual in such cases, he offended all parties. His brilliant talents, which could not have failed to secure him celebrity, if he had acted with either of the influential parties, could not screen him from the stings and arrows of ridicule, directed at him by both, whenever his eloquence was employed against the measures of either. The Radicals, as they were called in the House, turned with hope to what they considered so promising a leader to their ranks; but were soon discouraged by the fierté and

sternness with which the uncompromising Desbrow met their advances, or laid down his own generous, but Utopian, political system. His large fortune, ancient family, extensive connections, and fine person, were passports to the best society that London can boast. We have placed fortune at the top of the list of his claims to attention, because it is the one that never fails to obtain it—an opinion warranted by the fact so thoroughly established, that in Christian England, a wealthy Jew, with no other recommendation than his property, is sure of a cordial reception in circles where merit, wanting it, would be barely tolerated; and he who can buy "golden opinions from all sorts of men," will have little reason to complain of "want of all the external marks of respect in London." Bacon said, that "knowledge is power;" but had he lived in our days, he would have been compelled to substitute "riches" for "knowledge;" so universal is the homage paid to them in all ranks: and, when one sees the distinctions fortune can command,

one is compelled to assent to the truth of the Frenchman's remark, that, L'or est comme le soleil, il donne à la boue, de la consistance.

The twelve thousand a-year, landed property, that Desbrow really possessed, with above a hundred thousand pounds in the funds, the savings of his long minority, were magnified into at least twice that amount, by that most generally untrue oracle, common rumour. His whereabouts were prated of in the fashionable newspapers; anticipations were given of the splendid mansion to be fitted up, in the style of Louis Quatorze, for the rich Mr. Desbrow; new services of gilt plate were to be added to the costly family plate of his ancestors; and it was more than hinted at, that the fine diamonds, which attracted Queen Charlotte's admiration at the drawing-rooms some thirty years before, on the presentation of Mr. Desbrow's mother, were only waiting until he had selected, from out the parterre of aristocratic beauty, some rosebud worthy of being decked

in them. For some weeks, the columns of all the fashionable journals were eloquent in praise of—his *wealth*, and dilated with grandiloquence on all the agréments it commanded. In one he was styled, *par excellence*, the *rich* Mr. Desbrow; and in another, the richest commoner in England. His porter had scarcely time to run his eye over the morning papers, from the repeated knocks at the door. Visits and cards of invitation poured in for many weeks in advance, counting on that upon which none can calculate—*life*—the most precarious of all our possessions, and bidding guests to feasts six weeks after date, as if existence was held by a fixed tenure. Pink, blue, and straw coloured notes, redolent with perfumes, were mingled with the heterogeneous mass of letters that littered the hall table every day. Petitions from reduced officers, whose regiments it would have puzzled the War Office to discover; from distressed gentlemen with large families, "unfit to work, yet *not* ashamed to beg;" unfortunate

young ladies, under the most dreadful embarrassment; and elderly ones, wanting the necessaries of life, appealed to "his well-known benevolence," to rescue them from despair. In short, such shoals of applications were daily made, that nothing less than the purse of Fortunatus could have enabled Desbrow to comply with even a tenth part of the demands made on him.

Silversmiths, jewellers, upholsterers, coach-makers, tailors, hatters, boot and shoe makers, all besieged his door, with the newest patterns and chef d'œuvres of their respective crafts, begging the honour of entering his name in their books. New discoveries of balsams, and pomades for renovating the hair, or toupéts and patent spring peruques for concealing the want of it, were recommended to his notice; and dentists apprised him that the finest sets of teeth, emulating pearl, and far surpassing the natural production, were ready to be submitted for his inspection. Desbrow could not forbear a smile, as he glanced in the glass, at his curly

locks of rich brown, and his regular teeth of pure white: and in candour we must admit that there was some portion of self-complacency intermingled with the reflection, that at least *he* had no occasion for such substitutes. There were other letters which excited frowns rather than smiles: they came from the proprietors of gaming-houses, designating their establishments under the specious names of clubs, "having the honour of informing Mr. Desbrow that the —— club is open from ten at night until four in the morning, with the bank on the table." Such notifications Desbrow threw with indignation into the fire. What! thought he, is London, the first capital in the world, arrived at that degree of depravity, that such invitations are openly sent to men of character, without their being considered as an insult? He was one day in the act of committing several of these epistles to the flames, when Arlington entered, and observing the visible emotion of his friend, enquired what had so moved him.

When the cause was explained, Arlington could not resist a laugh, at what he called the virtuous indignation of Desbrow, who became almost angry that Arlington *could* laugh at that which he considered an implied insult—the being invited to a gaming-house.

"All such letters I throw into the fire," said Desbrow, suiting the action to the word."

"A sort of poetical justice," said Arlington, laughing, "as you only consign them to that native element supposed to be peculiar to the places whence they originated. I too, like you, burn them; but I am afraid, unlike you, I generally look in at these pandemoniums, and have often left there, not only the contents of my purse, but my temper. Spare me, dear Desbrow, the moral lesson that your grave face portends; all that you *would*, that you *could*, say on the subject, my own common sense has said to me fifty times, and yet I have gone on—well, well, le jour viendra, when I shall repent, and lead a sober life, and give you the merit of my conversion."

CHAPTER IV.

"La civilisation actuelle est un mensonge convenu qui ne trompe que les niais."

THE warm reception that Desbrow experienced on making his debût in London, soon subsided into a coldness bordering on indifference, when his soi-disant friends and acquaintances discovered how little benefit could result to them from his riches. Those who had calculated on his dinners, and had even resolved to assist him with their advice in choosing an artiste de cuisine, were as indignant, as they were disappointed, at what they termed his absurd mode of living. Others, who had kindly under-

taken to select horses for him, from the stables of dealers with whom their accounts were neither of short date nor small amount, felt almost offended when he civilly declined their assistance: and those, who had, from equally disinterested motives, recommended their too *trusting* coachmakers, tailors, and jewellers, were so loud in their censures, of his want of taste in not employing them, that people were so ill-natured as to suppose that they had more than a common interest in their recommendations.

In proportion to Desbrow's sinking in the estimation of his fashionable young male acquaintance, he rose in that of the elderly; he was cited by fathers as a model to sons; his prudence, his abstinence from gaming, and keeping race horses, were recorded not only as praiseworthy omissions of extravagance, but as positive virtues; and groaning sires, at each new demand from ruined and ruinous sons, wished that *they* had such heirs as Desbrow. The ladies of a certain age also honoured him with no slight portion

of esteem; and mothers and aunts reposed so much confidence in him, that they frequently poured into his ear complaints of daughters and nieces, who disliked balls, fêtes, and routs so much, that they were obliged to be forced to appear at them; and yet, the dear creatures were so sweet-tempered, that, when at such entertainments, they appeared so content, few could ever have supposed they were there unwillingly. The young ladies also shewed no disinclination towards Desbrow; and, though some persons maliciously insinuated that his thousands and tens of thousands had some share in their admiration, yet he was too good-looking, well bred, and agreeable, to admit of its being believed that his fortune was the principal attraction.

We pass over five seasons in London, and as many winters in the country, during which, Desbrow pursued the even tenour of his way, untempted, but not untempting, in matrimonial speculations. Various had been the country

houses to which he had been invited for the shooting seasons; and he had now become so au fait of the accomplishments of the Lady Mary's, Sophia's, and Augusta's, of each lordly mansion, that he shrank back from the exhibition and exhibitors, and learnt to consider each reunion des grandes maisons as a bazaar, where beauty and accomplishments were exposed for sale to the highest bidder.

When appealed to by acquaintances, if he did not think Lady Mary or Augusta very beautiful, he assented with a coldness that resembled more that of an anchorite, than a young man of four-and-twenty; and when repeatedly assured how clever such or such a young lady was, he admitted it in a way that proved he did not consider cleverness and agreeability synonymous terms. An aching void was in his heart; and he began to think he was too fastidious to hope that it might ever be filled up, as the women whose beauty attracted, repelled him by their frivolity or affectation:

and those whose cleverness allured, disgusted him by their pedantry and love of display. From flirtations with matrons he was deterred, not by want of encouragement, but by the severity of his moral principles; as, unlike the generality of his contemporaries, he *had* tenets and certain established rules of conduct in his mind, from which hitherto he had never swerved; and though they exposed him to the ridicule of those who gloried in that which he shunned, he had sufficient mental courage, not only to act up to these, but not to be ashamed of them — a mauvaise honte of which too many are often guilty.

The experience of each session of Parliament, had convinced Desbrow that there existed but little chance of his seeing the adoption of the changes he desired; still he conscientiously attended each debate, and voted on each division, in support of the measures he advocated. He was looked on by the tepid politicians as a Quixotic theorist, and by the extreme liberals

as an impracticable one. His total freedom from prejudice, in judging his political opponents,—a freedom so rare at all times, but doubly so, when party feeling ran high,—had preserved him from exciting or indulging angry passions; and he passed through the busy scenes of life more as a spectator than an actor.

A refined taste and knowledge in the fine arts led to many hours of pure enjoyment: in visiting the studios of the best artists, in painting and sculpture, and in selecting from them whatever most pleased his fastidious eye to grace his mansion, he found an inexhaustible source of interest.

The sums that were lavished by other men of his station and fortune on horses, and in gaming, were expended by Desbrow in encouraging the arts; and many a chef d'œuvre decked the walls and niches of his gallery, which offered triumphant proofs of the excellence at which our native artists have arrived.

Many of Desbrow's hours were passed in his library, which was well filled with the choicest works; and time never flew so rapidly and agreeably, as when, seated in an easy chair with a favourite author in his hand, he yielded to the fascination of solitude, feeling "never less alone than when alone." Often did the thought occur to him, of how delicious it would be to have his solitude shared by some lovely and amiable being; to whom he could read aloud the passages that most pleased him, and in whose sympathy his pleasures would be doubled. But the young ladies, whose exteriors might have suited his taste, had so fatigued him with the endless display of their accomplishments, that he sighed in despair at the hopelessness of meeting a woman young, lovely, and with a mind that could *think* and *converse*, instead of exhibiting her proficiency in superficial talents too often acquired at the expense of the sacrifice of intellectual cultivation. Though the unthinking part of the world pause not to

enquire into causes, whose effects amuse them, those who look beyond the surface know that there are no Admirable Crichtons in the world, male or female, and that a young lady cannot apply to music and painting alone, the number of hours necessary to arrive at excellence in either, without considerably deducting from the time which should have been devoted to the attainment of that general information and instruction, absolutely essential to the formation of an intellectual and cultivated companion. Fine musicians and painters can always be procured by the rich, who require not artists in their wives; but rational society, conversational powers, and general information, cannot be bought. These are the only ingredients that sweeten life and cement affection among married people. Accomplishments are delightful accessories, but cultivation of mind is an indispensable requisite in domestic happiness; yet upon this simple truth few parents reflect, and young women are taught arts by which they may shine in public,

rather than the solid attainments that shed a mild and even lustre in private life. Hence that want of extraneous society, experienced by so many wedded pairs in fashionable life, which renders a conjugal tête-à-tête proverbial for its dulness.

Such reflections were forced on the mind of Desbrow, when listening to the syren tones and scientific accompaniments of many of the young ladies who exhibited nightly before him, on the harp or piano, or whose portfeuilles displayed sketches that would not have shamed even some of the best of our artists; but, whose conversation, if conversation it might be called, completely proved how such accomplishments had been acquired—at the sacrifice of the cultivation of their mental faculties.

Arlington laughed at the fastidious taste of his friend; and, when leaning over the instrument whence some young lady was drawing dulcet sounds, that "wrapt his entranced soul in elysium," he pitied the morbid feelings of

Desbrow, which prevented his enjoyment of talent, because she who displayed it, had bought it at the price of — mind. The truth was, that Desbrow esteemed women much more highly than did his friend; and was grieved, when, by a perverted system of education, he saw them take a lower grade in the scale of utility, than, as rational beings, he thought them destined to fill; whereas Arlington, who looked only for amusement in female society, considered them as creatures formed to administer to his caprices,—beautiful triflers, with whom he might while away his leisure hours, seek with the same nonchalance that he sought his other pleasures, and leave with as little regret.

The beau-ideal of woman, as she ought to be, that Desbrow had created in his imagination, and after which his soul aspired, made him view every handsome female with feelings of interest; which only subsided on his discovering how unlike each was to the picture his fancy had

drawn. Then, like all enthusiasts, he turned with disgust from what disappointed his ardent expectation; and saw with distorted vision, the defects of those who had fallen short of the perfection he had imagined for them.

Young men who have not had sisters, or near female relations, with whom they have been domesticated, are but too apt to form false estimations of women. Seeing them only in general society, where even the least coquettish of the sex are apt to assume qualities of which they have only the semblance, such men are liable either to give them implicit credit for the possession of these qualities, or, if sharp-sighted, to condemn them too severely for their assumption. Hence women often find dupes, or sceptics, in men of this temperament; while in those who have passed much of their early youth with mothers and sisters, they meet with neither, as such men know by experience that many admirable qualities may exist, in combination with a too great desire of attracting admiration, —a fault from which few women are wholly free.

CHAPTER V.

"Oui te dis-je la société est comme une machine à vapeur lancée par une force secrète et prodigieuse; c'est extravagance que de croire l'arrêter en jetant sous une de ses roues, ton petit grain de sable que tu apelles principes. Il n'existe plus aujourd'hui qu'un seul bien d'homme à homme, de société à société, de gouvernement à gouvernement? L'interêt, l'interêt lui seul."

Desbrow had observed that for several weeks he had seen much less of his friend Arlington than formerly; and that when they met, Arlington appeared much more serious than he had been wont to do.

Desbrow was not one of those tepid friends who enquire not into the cause of any altera-

tion, lest their assistance may be required,—a tact in the practice of which, our young men of the nineteenth century have acquired a peculiar proficiency. He, unlike the common herd, sought out his friend, and enquired, with that unaffected expression of interest, which never can be mistaken for mere curiosity, why Arlington appeared so serious and distrait. The earnestness with which he endeavoured to prove that he was neither, did not convince Desbrow; but he declined urging him further, seeing that the subject was disagreeable to him.

A few nights after, at a soirée at Lady Ardmore's, the marked and unceasing attention of Arlington to Lady Walmer, disclosed the probable cause of his pre-occupation; and Desbrow saw with regret that he was not the only observer of the flirtation, as all the society seemed to regard the actors in it with glances, in which more of malice than charity was visible.

While standing talking to two or three men of his acquaintance, one remarked that the

affair between Lady Walmer and Arlington seemed quite established; another said that Arlington was a happy dog; and a third observed that if Lady Walmer committed herself, it might be attributed to the improper female society her husband permitted her to keep.

"Fancy," said Lord Sneerwell, "letting her go about with that abominable old woman, Lady Bronze, who has made more marriages, and assisted in giving more cause for dissolving them, than all the women in England put together."

"I assure you," said Sir Edward Ponder, "she has marred more marriages than she has helped to make; for many of my acquaintance are afraid to marry, while old Bronze remains in activity."

"How very ill-natured you are all," said Lord Metcalf. "Now, I maintain that Lady Bronze is the most useful person in London; for she has a heart to pity, and a house to receive the pining votaries of the tender pas-

sion, and one has only to lose a few hundreds to her at ecarté, which she has a singular facility in assisting you to do, and she is your friend for the season, and not only your friend, but your friend's friend—pardessus le marché. Arlington has taken his stray hundreds to her mansion instead of Crockford's, ever since his grand passion for Lady Walmer,—and you see the happy result."

"You may say what you will," rejoined Lord Sneerwell, "but Lady Bronze's is one of the pleasantest houses in town; there, one can always have flirtation, ecarté, and scandal,—three of the most agreeable pastimes going; and the old dame plays her cards so well, in more than one sense of the word, that chez elle—'Lovers are all they ought to be, and husbands not the least alarmed.' By the by," added Sneerwell, "old Bronze got off very well in not being named on a certain trial, in which the gouvernante of poor Lady —— was asked

to name the person, she considered *fashionable*, but not *proper* society. What a tale might there be disclosed!"

Disgusted with this exposé, Desbrow left the saloon, reflecting that the vice which had been thus laid bare, without shocking any of the individuals who had heard it except himself, was tolerated in a class that affected to shrink from contact with aught approaching to vulgarity; and yet could live on terms of intimacy with a female, who practised vices that would disgrace the lowest of her sex, and led the weak and erring into a labyrinth of sin, ending in ruin and disgrace.

When Desbrow met Arlington on the following day, he told him of the conversation he had heard the night previous, without naming the interlocutors. The blush of anger, rather than of shame, rose to the cheek of Arlington, when he discovered how openly his position with Lady Walmer had been canvassed; and, selfish as he was, he felt pained, when the thought struck

him of how *she* would have shrunk with dismay could she have heard the comments that Desbrow repeated. This thought softened him; and, with more of the warmth of early years than Desbrow had seen him evince since their entrée into fashionable life, he grasped the hand of his friend, and owned that he loved, passionately loved, Lady Walmer.

"And have you ever reflected on the probable results of the indulgence of this guilty passion?" asked Desbrow. "Nay, has it not already led to the moral degradation of her you love? For the purpose of meeting her with greater facility, have you not joined her in the sinful and shameful league of intimacy with Lady Bronze, whose dupes you both equally are? for this vile person, who assists your liaison, would be the first to desert your unfortunate friend, Lady Walmer, if a discovery of her guilt took place; and more, would league with her foes against her, in order to screen herself from blame or suspicion for the odious part she had herself

taken in it. Let me implore you, my dear Arlington, to conquer this unhallowed passion, ere it has involved the woman you love in ruin. I do not talk to you of the ruin you will bring on yourself, or the misery it will inflict on your excellent father, though another would probably dwell on these motives more strongly than the one I urge; but, as you say you love, passionately love, Lady Walmer, spare her, I beseech you, the wretchedness and disgrace that must fall on *her*, if you succeed in turning her from the path of duty. She is a proud woman, accustomed to meet respect at every side, and little able to support the world's dread laugh, or more dread pity."

"Spare me, Desbrow, spare me," said Arlington. "I feel all that you urge; and if I have as yet resisted the temptation to which I am exposed, it is because I have thought of her happiness more than my own, and dare not contemplate the possible, nay, too certain re-

sults which the gratification of my passion may entail on her."

"The season is nearly over," said Desbrow, "let us go to Scotland together, and remain there, until the hunting commences at Melton. I have hitherto declined accompanying you to either place, but now I am willing to devote my time to amusements, which you know are little to my taste, in order to remove you from a temptation that you may not always have sufficient force to resist."

"But how," said Arlington, "will my departure appear to *her* on whom all my movements have depended for the last four months? Will she not have cause to think me the most unworthy and volage of my sex, if at the moment I have won her to avow that I am not indifferent to her,—an avowal that cost her so much to make,—I leave London without an explanation with her? No! this I cannot do; a week ago it might have been; for then, I had

not told her how I loved, though my attentions must have betrayed my feelings; but now her's are sacred to me, and must not be humiliated, as they inevitably would be, were I to depart without informing her that it is to save her that I go."

"Do not see her then," said Desbrow, "write what you feel; and if Lady Walmer be the woman you take her to be, she will respect the sacrifice you make to preserve her honour and happiness."

It was settled that Arlington and Desbrow should leave London in three days for Scotland; and the former commenced the painful task of writing to Lady Walmer.

The good advice of Desbrow would have had little chance of being attended to, had not Arlington observed in the character of her he loved, a natural fierté, which not even the passion she was reciprocating to had been able to subdue; and now, that Desbrow's representation

had brought the possible result of their attachment more visibly before his eyes, he shrank from the fearful responsibleness of involving a proud and sensitive woman in a position in which she would have to encounter humiliation and sorrow, from which not all his devoted attachment could screen her. The conviction that he was saving her from future misery, alone enabled him to withstand seeing her again, or gave him courage to write her his adieu. Perhaps the proudest moment, though far from being the happiest of his life, was that when he had dispatched the letter, and thus triumphed over his own selfish feelings.

Lady Walmer was one of the handsomest women in England, highly accomplished, and possessing great fascination of manners. She had married, in early youth, Lord Walmer,—a man of large fortune and little mind, who devoted the slight portion of intellect he possessed, to field sports, during eight months in the year, and the other four, were pretty equally

divided between the clubs, theatres, and House of Lords. Lady Walmer had been spoiled by a doting mother; as an only daughter and a beauty, the vain parent had indulged all her caprices. She learned only what she liked; and as she only liked music, drawing, and novel reading, her studies were chiefly confined to these accomplishments. Early impressed with a belief of her own importance, which her great personal beauty, even more than her high connections, tended to confirm, she seemed to consider the society into which she was introduced at seventeen as a theatre, where she was to enact the role of premier actress, to the general satisfaction of an admiring audience. Her personal attraction gained her many suitors; from whom she selected Lord Walmer, because he was the best looking, and best dressed man amongst them. In return he was proud to call her his wife, she being the most admired young belle about town, whose possession all his set would consequently envy him. They fancied that they loved

each other, and did not discover their mistake until nearly two months after it was irremediable. The discovery was made, like many similar ones, after a few weeks' residence, tête-à-tête, in the country, when ample time and scope is provided for acquiring a knowledge of defects, which, if detected *before* instead of *after* marriage, might prevent many an indissoluble knot from being ever tied, and save many an unhappy couple from *yawns*, if not *sighs*, in after years. Lady Walmer found that her lord was very *tiresome;* while he felt that he was only very *tired* of matrimony, or the country; which it was, he had not quite determined.

"Do you not observe that the days are interminably long, my dear William?" asked Lady Walmer of her lord, one evening during their séjour at his fine seat, as, with a suppressed yawn, converted into a sigh, she tried to find out the most comfortable corner of the bergére, in which she was reclining."

"Why yes, my love," replied the husband,

"I have observed it; but, pardon my frankness, I think the fault is yours."

"Mine! mine!" repeated Lady Walmer, while her heightened colour, and eyes opened to their utmost extent, proved the astonishment she felt at the accusation. "Pray explain," continued she, "how *I*, who, a few weeks, nay, days ago, could, as you said, give wings to time, can so soon have discovered the power of clipping them, and of applying lead to his feet?"

"Do not feel offended at my candour," said Lord Walmer; "but the truth is, it appears to me that you are not formed for the country."

"By your deprecating my wrath," rejoined the lady, "it would appear that there was something to be angry at, though, for my part, I should have taken the observation as a compliment."

"Why, I meant," said Lord Walmer, "that you don't like walking through the grounds."

"Agreed," interrupted Lady Walmer; "but I propose an amendment,—say that *I hate* walking through neglected pleasure grounds, where dead leaves are whirled over my feet at every step, and thorns pierce my shoes."

"Because," interrupted her husband, "you would, in spite of my advice, persist in walking in silk slippers, instead of shoes adapted to the occasion."

"I detest thick shoes!" replied the lady; "but I detest still more having your abominable dogs jumping up on my dress! and, when I am talking to you, to be interrupted by 'So ho, poor fellow! there's a good dog!' or 'Come here, Neptune.' I like a walk similar to those we used to enjoy at the Zoological Gardens on a Sunday, when all your attention was given to *me*, and when we met all our acquaintances. You could then admire my dress, find out that I was looking well; but now,"—and here she looked angry,—"you think of nothing but

horses, or dogs; and I have caught you twice looking at your betting-book; and thrice have you been on the point of going to sleep, while I was singing your favourite song."

"Well, I must say, Lady Walmer," replied her husband, which was the first time he had given her that title, "that you are not very good-natured. You take no interest in the things I like. Every man is fond of horses and dogs; therefore, there is nothing peculiar in my attachment to them."

"But does every man bore his wife with them?" asked the lady.

"I am sorry I have bored you," replied the husband coldly.

"I expected," said Lady Walmer, "that you would have read to me when I was tired of talking, or hearing you talk. I had the most amusing new French novels; but you declined, and sat silent opposite to me, only interrupting my sombre reflections by retailing to me some of the 'bon mots' of Crockford's, or chaste plaisanteries of White's.

Now, in London, you used to read the passages I had marked in all the new novels, admired all that I admired, and never allowed a moment to hang heavy on my hands."

"By all means let us return then," said Lord Walmer.

"Oh! pray do," said the lady, and the prospect of their approaching departure from solitude was so agreeable to both, that they became more cheerful than they had been for the last six days; and mutually agreed that nothing was so conducive to ill-humour and discontent as the country. In short, they discovered that Walmer Hall was a most disagreeable place, and internally vowed never to return to it, except with a large party in the shooting season.

Neither discovered any fault in self, though the defects in the other were very visible to each; and in proportion to such discoveries, was the increased appreciation of self, and depreciation of the other.

With this solid foundation for erecting the brittle structure of domestic happiness, Lord and Lady Walmer returned to society; and plunged into its vortex with an avidity that proved how much their temporary retirement had enhanced its charms. They mutually declared to their London friends, how bored they had been in the country; and implied, by their dislike of it, that their honey-moon resembled not even a *treacle* moon, as a late celebrated poet was wont to call it, but had more of vinegar and opium than of sweets in it.

Both being good-tempered, and possessing ample means for indulging their tastes, their lives passed in a round of amusements, without being embittered by the disagreements that too often ensue, when Hymen has joined those whom Cupid has not united. Lady Walmer, content with being considered one of the reigning belles à la mode, wished not to exchange general for individual admiration; and had. until her acquaintance with Arlington, escaped

unscathed by love, or scandal. Indeed, she thought herself secure from both; *but* what woman can defy the snares of the wily archer, unless incased in the armour of religion and strict moral principle? The attentions of Arlington had created an interest for him in her breast, before she was aware that those attentions meant more than the general assiduities she was accustomed to receive: for he had sufficient tact to perceive that a premature disclosure of his passion might defeat its object. It was not therefore until he had so accustomed her to receive his attentions, and that they became almost necessary to her, that he dared to breathe into her ear the unhallowed avowal. "The woman who deliberates is lost," is a received axiom; and the wife who listens to a declaration of love, has already lost the mental purity, which ought to be her safeguard; for even, if she have sufficient virtue to refrain from farther concessions, she must have betrayed a levity incompatible with her duty, or

no man could have dared to hazard such a measure,—and "he comes too near who comes to be denied."

In listening to Arlington's avowal with complacency, Lady Walmer never contemplated that the passion she was thus encouraging, could lead to any more serious consequences than the countless similar ones she saw tolerated in the society in which she lived. But who speculates upon consequences, when the heart, or the vanity, are interested? She was one of the innumerable instances of the fatal effects of that demoralizing system, so generally pursued at present, of permitting, by tacit acquiescence, the existence of liaisons which, some years ago, would have driven a woman from society, the present toleration of which encourages her in a conduct that merits her expulsion from it. Arlington's letter, announcing his departure, opened her eyes to the precipice on which she stood; and she drew back affrighted from the danger she

had escaped; but piqued that she owed her escape to the forbearance of her lover, instead of, to her own virtue and prudence. With woman's vanity, she wished that *she* had triumphed over the reason, as well as the heart of Arlington, and that she had the power of then repulsing him,—which power she flattered herself she possessed,—and of proving to him she was not the weak woman he believed her to be.

Alas! we are never so weak as when we count most on our strength! and Lady Walmer, in giving way to pique, rather than gratitude, towards Arlington, proved the truth of this adage. "How absurd," thought she; "he seems to have taken for granted, that in return for his violent passion, I was ready to sacrifice my honour and peace;" never reflecting, that in countenancing that passion she had stained the first, and risked the second. "How I long to meet him again, if only to prove how ill he judged me. I certainly liked him; but, the

idea of abandoning my home and my station, (her husband was not thought of) never entered into my head. What! give up my brilliant position to become a divorcée,—an outcast of society!—Poor Arlington little knows me, when he thinks it possible."

Thus, has reasoned many a woman in similar circumstances, whose imprudence has led to the terrible result she dared not contemplate, until condemned to support all its misery and obloquy. Vanity had seared the feelings of Lady Wahner; and she could not appreciate the motives that led Arlington to fly from her presence, while she had tolerated his passion. She determined to seek him again, and, by her blandishments, bring him once more to her feet, more in love than ever; and then, *she* would shew him that *she* could command her feelings, and either banish the love, or the lover, for ever from her mind.

CHAPTER VI.

"Le besoin d'emotions est pour nous, ce que l'opium est pour les Orientaux."

Desbrow and Arlington set off for Scotland, the one, satisfied with himself and his friend, for the sacrifice that friend had made; and the other, casting "many a longing, lingering look behind," at her he had left, and left with the consciousness of being beloved by ——. One thought alone consoled him, and that was, the conviction that *she* would understand and value the motives of his flight. Was that flight not the most indubitable proof of his love?—a proof that a high-minded and delicate woman, such as he believed Lady Walmer to be, could

not fail to appreciate? And he gloried in the idea that this sacrifice would render him dearer than ever to her, to whose happiness and honour it was offered up.

We will not describe the journey, which passed like most journeys undertaken in a luxurious travelling carriage, with a friend to converse with, when the desire for conversation is entertained; and the pockets and net of the carriage stored with the last new publications.

At Edinburgh they fell in with a few men of fashion; who, like themselves, had anticipated the close of the London, and the commencement of the grouse season, and were bestowing their tediousness on the modern Athens, instead of whiling it away in their accustomed haunts in London. But the old enemy,—ennui,—followed them to the North; and they yawned scarcely less there than in the metropolis from which they had escaped, unconscious that locomotion only lulls it to sleep for a short time, to awaken with increased force.

Arlington and Desbrow proceeded to the Duke of Clydesdale's, where they were engaged to pass some time; and where, they found the usual assortment of political and fashionable aristocrats, enlivened by the admixture of a few of the neighbouring gentlemen, whose racy accents, and manifold Scotticisms, added piquancy to the dulness of conversation, so prevalent in the society of the haut ton.

The Duke of Clydesdale had no less than five unmarried daughters, all as remarkable for their personal attractions, as for the amiable desire of displaying them, and of rendering themselves agreeable to the unmarried male visitors of their noble father, to whose different tastes and characters they assimilated their own, for the time being, with a tact peculiar to untochered lassies, of noble birth, but ignoble fortunes It was edifying to hear the grave bachelor of a certain age, observe what a sensible and charming person the Lady Madeline was; how much she liked domestic life, and

was calculated to adorn it; while some young peer, who had only completed his majority, swore that she was the most delightful mad-cap in the world, and just the sort of wife to take to Melton.

Not a particle of jealousy existed between the sisters; on the contrary, they played admirably into each others' hands, considering all the unmarried men who came to Clydesdale Castle as fair game to try their talents on, and marriage as the aim and end of all their manœuvres. They communicated their discoveries of the tastes and dispositions of the men to each other; and Lady Madeline has been known to resign a conquest, half achieved, to Lady Jeanet, on having found out that the latter had been flirting with a man who had expressed a greater admiration for herself, of which her sister had judiciously informed her. The young ladies' powers of pleasing were however, tried in vain on the occupied heart of

Arlington; and Desbrow was too well schooled, to permit his being the dupe of these female Proteuses, who had sufficient quickness of perception to discover, that in neither of the friends should they find a husband.

Two days after their arrival, the Marquis and Marchioness of Ayrshire, with a young female relative of the latter, joined the party at Clydesdale Castle; and their presence was hailed, not only as an addition, but an acquisition to the party. Lady Ayrshire, no longer in the zenith of that beauty which had made her the most brilliant star of the English Court, for the last seventeen years, possessed a charm of manner, joined to good sense and a highly-cultivated mind, that rendered her a general favourite in society. Mademoiselle de Bethune, her relative, was the daughter of a French nobleman of ancient family, who had married the cousin of the marchioness; and who, having lost her while his daughter was yet an infant,

at the dying request of his wife, confided his child to the care of Lady Ayrshire.

Mademoiselle de Bethune was now in her seventeenth year; beautiful as the beau-ideal of the painter, or the dream of the young poet, and with an unconsciousness of her beauty, that lent her new charms, by leaving her unconstrained, and graceful in her movements as infancy itself, with the modesty that belongs to innocence alone.

Cecile de Bethune was rather above than below the middle stature; her form slight, but finely rounded, with feet and hands that might have served as a model to the sculptor. Her complexion was delicately fair; her eyes large, dark, and lustrous; her hair black, and brilliant as the wing of the raven, when illumined by the sun; and her teeth regular and white as pearls. When to these attractions are added eye-brows, whose long jetty arches lent expression to the brilliant orbs beneath them, shaded with eye-lashes, that softened but obscured not

their lustre; and lips, whose bright colour made the cheeks near them look pale, we cannot wonder that Cecile de Bethune was never seen without exciting admiration, nor known without being loved. Her education had been as judicious as the good sense and experience of Lady Ayrshire, who superintended, was calculated to make it; and the yearly visits to London had allowed her to receive the lighter accomplishments that London masters excel in bestowing. The death of her mother had given a tinge of seriousness to the character of Cecile, that accorded well with the peculiar style of her beauty; while the affectionate tenderness of Lady Ayrshire had awakened in her heart sentiments of gratitude and love, which were evinced in a thousand ways, as delightful to that amiable woman, as they were spontaneous in her charming ward.

Arlington was in the library at Clydesdale Castle, when Lord and Lady Ayrshire with Mademoiselle de Bethune arrived; and when

going to dress for dinner, he could not resist walking into Desbrow's room, who had entered late from a long ride, to inform him of the new arrival, and to expatiate on the beauty and grace of the young stranger.

"Now, is the moment come," said Arlington, "when your stoicism is to be conquered, and by a French woman, for no disengaged heart can resist the attractions of Mademoiselle de Bethune."

"How little do you know me," replied Desbrow, "if you imagine that I am to be caught by mere beauty, and French beauty too, which is that, which I least admire. No, un joli petit minois chiffonné, with lively eyes and high cheek bones; un nez à la Roxalane, and a mouth determined on shewing the teeth that belong to it, is not at all to my taste. I no more dread the power of this belle Francaise over my heart, than that of the five belles, who have been so obstinately bent on enslaving it ever since I came here."

The praises of Arlington had disposed Desbrow to think lightly of the beauty of Cecile; and, when he was presented to her before dinner, he scarcely allowed himself to look sufficiently at her, to discover whether Arlington's description was or was not exaggerated.

At dinner he found himself opposite to her, and could not help being struck with the extreme beauty of her countenance, and the admirable form of her head. He thought her however, too pale, until some observation from the person next her, which he did not overhear, brought the roses to her cheek; and he then mentally acknowledged, what no man of taste ought ever to doubt,—namely, that a face in which the lily predominates, save when animation tinges it with a faint blush, is that which is to be most preferred in female beauty. Her graceful and unaffected deportment, and a certain dignified decorum of manner, which, while it repelled familiarity, discouraged not conversation, made themselves felt by Desbrow,

and ere she had left the salle-à-manger, he had made up his mind that she was not only the most beautiful, but the most lady-like young person he had ever seen. The triumphant glances with which, from time to time, Arlington regarded him, as if to say, "you see I did not exaggerate her charms," annoyed him, and diminished the extent of his admiration. It was this ill-judged pertinacity on the part of Arlington, which defeated the end he wished to accomplish, of leading Desbrow to admire Cecile, which he could not fail to do, had he been left to discover all her attractions by himself, without their being obtruded on his attention by the injudicious zeal of his friend.

We are always less prone to admit the perfection of those for whom our approbation is demanded; and many a woman has appeared comparatively plain in our eyes, from having heard her charms extolled, whose beauty might otherwise have been readily admitted.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the

drawing-room, Desbrow remained at the corner the most remote from that part which Mademoiselle de Bethune occupied. Lady Ayrshire was seated near him, conversing with the Duke of Clydesdale, and he unintentionally found himself a listener to their conversation.

"Suppose we go into the music-room," said the duke; "my girls generally sing for us, and I make no doubt Mademoiselle de Bethune is a proficient in music."

Now, be it known to our readers, that music was the grand cheval de bataille, of the young ladies of Clydesdale Castle; they had devoted many an hour to its acquirement, and as many more to its daily practice, so that they rarely met any competitors whom they did not far surpass in skill and science, in this their favourite, and indeed, principal, accomplishment.

Hence their noble father and themselves thought, or affected to think, that music was the most essential part of a young lady's educa-

tion, and that those who excelled not in it, were immeasurably behind them.

"I shall be delighted to hear the Ladies Urquhart sing," said Lady Ayrshire, "but Mademoiselle de Bethune is not a proficient in music, though she is fond of it."

"How strange!" replied the duke, with a smile of self-complacency, "it appears to me that a proficiency in music is absolutely indispensable in a young lady, and I wonder your ladyship has neglected to attend to it, in Mademoiselle de Bethune's education.

"Why, to say the truth," said Lady Ayrshire, "the time required for attaining a proficiency alarmed me, and there are so many branches of education which I consider still more essential than music, that I sacrificed it to them. Nor have I had any reason to regret this determination as my Cecile can sing and play quite well enough to please the few friends before whom she would not object to perform."

A contemptuous smile stole across the fea-

tures of the duke, as he offered his arm to conduct Lady Ayrshire to the music-room; but Desbrow, who had not missed a word of the conversation, turned with increased interest to look at the beautiful Cecile, and felt an increased respect for Lady Ayrshire, whose sentiments with regard to mere accomplishments so exactly coincided with his own.

The Ladies Urquhart favoured the company with many of the most difficult duets and trios of the Italian school, and even those accustomed to the voice of a Pasta or Malibran, might have listened with pleasure to them: though such auditors must have felt that they would have compromised for less science, and a little more *sentiment*, in their singing, as in this last desideratum they were rather deficient.

The unaffected admiration Mademoiselle de Bethune betrayed at the performance of the Ladies Urquhart, impressed Desbrow with a favourable opinion of her disposition, and the more so, as her appreciation of a science in

which she excelled not herself, proved her perfect freedom from the envy so often attributed to her sex.

He drew near her, as if controlled by some magnetic attraction, which he could not resist, and, as he stood behind her, suffered his eyes to dwell with a pleasure as new to him as it was delightful, on her graceful form and ivory shoulders.

He was startled from this contemplation by observing her lovely face and bust reflected in a large mirror at the opposite side, and the expression of her countenance varying with the music, now animated, the next moment pensive, appeared to him almost angelic.

When the Ladies Urquhart had ceased their performance, they pressed Mademoiselle de Bethune to sit down to the harp or piano-forte; and urged her with a perseverance almost obstinate, in defiance of her simple reiterated declaration, that "she was so little of a proficient in music that she never played or sang in

society, and consequently could not attempt doing either after the admirable performance to which she had been listening."

Desbrow thought the voice and accents in which her refusal was uttered, was the most harmonious he had ever heard, and he never so cordially assented to the proverb which sayeth, "that a low and sweet voice is excellent in woman," as while she was speaking.

CHAPTER VII.

"L'orsqu'on gouverne des hommes, il ne faut jamais penser qu'a leurs faiblessés."

Among the guests at Clydesdale Castle, were Lord and Lady Arden, or as they were more generally distinguished, Lady and Lord Arden, the lady always taking precedence of her husband, who was thrown into the back-ground, not by the superiority, but the pretensions of madame son epouse,—pretensions which his love of quiet, and knowledge of the pertinacity of the lady in maintaining them, prevented him from ever calling into question. Lord Arden was a man of highly cultivated mind, considerable abilities, and most amiable disposition.

Having been in his youth, a great admirer of beauty, that of his wife, which had been of the first order, captivated his fancy, and while its first effects were in their zenith, she acquired an influence over him, never after to be disputed.

This beauty, which had enabled her to reign despotically over his heart, she looked on with much the same feelings with which despotic sovereigns regard the divine right of kings, knowing that its basis is founded on the weakness of their subjects.

The universal attachment which the good qualities of Lord Arden excited in the breasts of all his friends, extended the empire of his arbitrary wife. All who wished to shew that respect to him which his talents and amiability merited, were compelled to submit to the caprices of her ladyship, who took advantage of the affection entertained for her husband by his friends, to treat them with an imperiousness as offensive as it was ill-judged.

Finding her caprices submitted to, they daily

increased, and far from attributing the forbearance she experienced to its real cause, she viewed it as a conclusive proof of her own superiority, and tyrannized still more over her excellent husband.

The first evening of her arrival, the family were rather surprised at seeing, in addition to the usual suite of domestics, a femme de chambre, valet de chambre, and footman, the unusual addition of a page and house-maid. The former to attend to my lady's private silver case of sauces, essences, salt, &c. &c. for dinner, prepared by the cook at Arden House, as she never trusted to strange cooks or butlers.

Antonio, for so the page was named, stood behind her chair at dinner, anticipated her wants, with zealous tact; served her with mocha coffee after the repast, and while she enjoyed her half hour's siesta on a sofa, gently rubbed her feet, the motion of his hand, as she was heard to observe, "inducing that light slumber which enabled her to get through the

fatigues of the evening." The house-maid was the only person she had ever met with, who really understood making a bed, and therefore, she never moved without her, for after all, as Lady Arden frequently observed, "comfort was the grand essential of life, and to those who could contribute to it, she was willing to submit. This is the true secret of life," she continued. "Witness its workings.—Lord Arden would be truly uncomfortable were I not pleased; to prevent his being so *therefore*, he submits to *me*. *I* should be uncomfortable if my femme de chambre was out of humour, because she has a bad temper, and displays it most disagreeably. Consequently, to prevent my being made uncomfortable, *I* submit to her; and the servants are obliged to do the same,—so, that you see that the love of comfort obliges us all to make sacrifices."

The morning after her arrival, Lady Arden complained of a violent tooth ache; all the remedies used on such occasions were applied, but

still she found no relief. At length she decided on sending to Edinburgh, a distance of fifty miles from Clydesdale Castle, for a dentist, to extract the suffering tooth, and, when he arrived, she declared, "that her nerves were unequal to submitting to the operation unless she saw it performed on some one else first."

The few friends admitted to the sanctuary of her boudoir, looked aghast at this declaration, each expecting to be called on; but, after the silence of a few minutes, and no one offering, she told Lord Arden that *he* must have a tooth out, that she might judge from *his* manner of supporting the operation if *she* could go through it. He appeared amazingly disconcerted, but a few wry faces and serious expostulations having failed to mollify the lady, the kind husband submitted, and a fine sound tooth was extracted from his jaw, after which she declared "That she had seen enough to convince her that she could not undergo a similar operation."

Lord Scamper, famous at Melton, and no

where else, was another of the guests at Clydesdale Castle.

Lady Arden declared that he was unbearable, his language only fit for the stable, and worse than all, that he used lavender water on his handkerchief; she requested that he might be placed as far from her at table as possible, while he whispered to Lady Madeline, that "Lady Arden seemed a very odd person, and reminded him of his famous mare Juno, who was shy of strangers, and would only be fed from the hands of a little groom boy in his stable, just as Lady Arden would only be served by her page.

Some one having talked of a new poem much read, Lord Scamper shook his head and said "There was only one really interesting poem in our language." Half a dozen people asked him to name it, as all were curious to hear the opinion of a person whose judgment on horses or dogs, alone was considered sound.

"Somerville's Chace!" was triumphantly

quoted by him, as his favorite; "indeed," added he, with naïveté "I never could get through any other poem, as they always set me to sleep."

Lady Rosina Urquhart, with an insinuating smile, meant to captivate Mr. Stuart, a young Scotchman of large fortune, on whose heart she had certain designs, and whose taste in poetry she had, with the quickness of perception peculiar to herself and sisters, already discovered, observed that "The Bride of Abydos," was, in her opinion, a most exquisite poem.

"Why, as to that," said Lord Scamper, "I once heard it read aloud,—that is to say, between whiles,—when I was awaked by the exclamations of the ladies who were present, and when it was over, and they all were moved to tears, I asked them the simple question, of why the poem was called *Bride* of Abydos? for, as far as I could discover, there was no marriage at all in the case. They were all very angry at my remark, but I like to be exact; and when

I find such mistakes, I cry out against being taken in."

Lady Jeanet, who respected the rent-roll of Lord Scamper, however she might despise his mental qualifications, remarked, "That it was very true,—it was wrong to entitle 'Zuleika', a bride, as she was not married;" and she was thanked by an approving smile from Lord Scamper, who, encouraged by her assent, launched forth into a critique,—if critique it could be called,—on the other poems of Lord Byron.

"'Childe Harolde,'" he pronounced, "to be a fanciful spoiled boy, who knew not what he wanted, who left England in disgust,—more shame for him,—and found, in every country he visited, the ennui he tried to escape from: had he tried Melton, he would never have left England. 'The Giaour,' was a desperado, influenced only by two passions,—*love* and *vengeance*,—a rascal," added Lord Scamper, "who in England would have been subject for the sur-

geons, instead of subject for the poet. 'The Corsair,'" continued he, "was no more or less than a pirate. Now, I say that I see little good in exciting sympathy for persons whose crimes merit a gibbet, and whom a jury of twelve honest men would EXALT in a different, though less poetical, way than Byron has done. 'Lara,' is another false hero, all mystery and moonshine; and yet our ladies weep over the recital of actions and crimes, which, if told in plain prose, without the charm of fine words and images, would excite their detestation; and gentlemen read with admiration of actions which, if called on as honest men on the bench of magistrates to judge, they would punish with the utmost severity of the laws, which such culprits had violated."

"But will you not admit," asked Lady Arden, (somewhat amused with the plain matter-of-fact view Lord Scamper had taken of Lord Byron's heroes,) "that 'Parisina' is a tale full of interest?"

"Not more so," replied Lord Scamper, "than half the trials in actions of damages, except that the heroine chooses the son of her husband for her lover. Now, if I saw a wife or sister of mine weep over the fate of such a jade as Parisina, I should rate her soundly; and the ladies who do pity such jades, and in their boudoirs melt over the story, would be the first to turn their backs on one of their less guilty country-women, nay, attack her with severity, as if to prove their own purity. 'Beppo' has less humbug in it than any of the rest of Byron's poems, and therefore I like it best; but as for 'Manfred,' he is the most crazy, improbable personage that ever a poet took it into his head to paint,—a blockhead that believes in sorcery, and speechefies to mountains and rocks, and whose insinuated crimes not only ought to have prevented his being made a hero of, but ought to have led to his being shut up in a mad-house."

"Why, as to the belief in sorcery," said

Mr. M'Tagart, "that is, I admit, too rediculous. I canna eemagine, hoo a man can give in to sich superstition. If 'Manfred' had believed in the second sight, there would be some sense in it."

"Oh! would to Heaven," exclaimed Lady Arden, in *sotto voce*, "that we had some Meleager here to destroy this Caledonian bore, who interrupts yonder Nimrod in the midst of his sapient reflections.

"But how comes it, my lord," asked Lady Arden, determined not to allow M'Tagart to continue, "that you, who stated that all poems, except Somerville's Chace, set you to sleep, can have acquired such a knowledge,—I won't say an accurate one,—of Lord Byron's poems?"

"Well, as you have asked the question," replied Lord Scamper, "I don't mind telling you the fact. When I found wherever I went, that people were always talking of Byron's works, and entering into details about them, I felt so cursedly foolish, knowing nothing of the

subject, that I employed one of my solicitor's clerks,—a clever lad,—to write me down a concise account of the character of each hero, plain matter-of-fact, leaving out all descriptions and fine words. What I have told you is an abridgement of what the lad wrote; and when I found that all England were admiring persons, whose crimes our laws would have punished so severely, I asked myself if it was not a shame for a man, and a peer too, to lend his genius to excite that sympathy for guilt which should only be given to honour and virtue."

A smile of contempt played over the haughty countenance of Lady Arden, which Lord Scamper observing, he added, "Your ladyship may smile at my opinions; but when I tell you that I got the clever lad I mentioned to draw out a case for each of the characters, and to submit it for counsel's opinion; and that the opinion was that each of the imaginary persons named would be liable to the severest penalty of the laws, you will admit that I do not speak

without some knowledge of the matter. None of us feel much pity for smugglers, poachers, or murderers, in real life; then why should we sympathize so much with villains in poetry?"

The gentlemen laughed; the ladies, with the exception of Lady Jeanet, dissented from Lord Scamper's matter-of-fact opinions; but she looked approval, and he seemed satisfied with her approbation.

The attention that Lady Arden engrossed was extremely offensive to the Ladies Urquhart; and they gave vent to the ire it excited, in expressions in which none of the peculiarities of her ladyship were spared. The good-nature and gentleness with which Mademoiselle de Bethune endeavoured to find excuses for the arbitrary lady, and to deprecate the wrath of the complaining ones, increased still more strongly the favourable impression she had made on Desbrow.

On leaving the music-room, some of the party assembled round a table covered with

albums, filled with drawings by the Ladies Urquhart, and the admiration of the guests was elicited for the performances of each.

Desbrow approached and offered to turn over the leaves of the album for Mademoiselle de Bethune, and they examined the drawings together, this led to a conversation, in which the justness of her remarks, and the modesty and gentleness with which they were made, still more captivated him. The Ladies Urquhart interchanged significant glances, as they observed the attention Desbrow was paying to Mademoiselle de Bethune, and Arlington enjoyed it, while, at a little distance, he affected to be occupied in looking over a portfolio.

A view of a scene in France led Desbrow to ask Mademoiselle de Bethune if she had been lately in her native country; and he remarked at the same time, that she spoke English so perfectly, that it was only by her name that he knew she was French. A blush and smile repaid him for the observation, while she added,

that nearly all her life had been passed in England; and having had an English mother, and adopted mother, she considered herself more than half English, though a dear father and brother in France, often reminded her she was a French woman, and called her thoughts and affections to her native country.

Desbrow retired for the night, his head and heart occupied by the beautiful Cecile; and his valet de chambre remarked, when assisting his toilette next morning, that he had never before seen his master half so fastidious. Desbrow smiled as he detected his own attention to the becoming in his dress, and rejoiced that Arlington was not present to observe and banter him.

A morning déshabille, that trial to female beauty, and a morning sun, which so few even of the fairest can bear, brightly beaming on her countenance, increased rather than diminished the charms of Mademoiselle de Bethune, which

never appeared to greater advantage than in the simple white morning dress, leaving only her fair throat and beautiful hands uncovered, while her raven hair, in all its silken luxuriance, fell in spiral ringlets round her polished temples, and shaded, but hid not, the delicate rose of her cheeks. Desbrow could scarcely withdraw his eyes from her; and when her mild glances met his, the soft blush that suffused her face as she withdrew them, betrayed that she was conscious of occupying much of his attention, and not displeased by it.

After breakfast, an equestrian excursion was proposed; and some of the ladies consented to join it. Desbrow had decided the day before on going to shoot, and had made all the necessary arrangements with the keepers; but when he heard Mademoiselle de Bethune assent to make one of the riding party, he immediately determined to ride also; and not even the arch smile of Arlington had power to prevent his

eagerly seeking to place himself as near Cecile as he could, in the gay cavalcade that left the castle.

They proceeded to view a ruined abbey, whose picturesque appearance the Ladies Urquhart loudly commended, and had perpetuated in many a drawing; and, in justice to them, we must add, the view of the original proved the correctness of their pencils.

Having explored the ruin, admired the delicate tracery of its arched windows, and the vivid draperies of ivy that adorned them, the party proceeded homewards by a different route, following the windings of the river. The road was narrow and uneven, being nothing more than a track for horse or foot passengers, and often approaching the edge of the steep bank of the rapid river. The party were obliged to proceed singly; and Mademoiselle de Bethune and Desbrow, who had been engaged in an interesting conversation, found themselves at a little distance behind the others. In passing a very

abrupt turn of the path, the bank, which had been undermined by the water, gave way, and Cecile and her horse were precipitated into the river, the horse plunging violently to disengage himself from his rider, who, with great presence of mind, maintained her seat, though the force of the current, and the efforts of the struggling animal, rendered it a most difficult task. To throw himself from his horse and jump into the river, was the work of a moment with Desbrow; who being an expert swimmer, hoped to be able to seize the bridle of Cecile's horse, and turn its head to the shore, from which the current was carrying it. But the violent exertions it made, burst the girths, and its helpless rider instantaneously overwhelmed in the eddying circles of the water, was sinking to rise no more, when, with a desperate effort, Desbrow seized her, and bore her to the shore; where, exhausted and breathless, he placed his precious burthen, and then sank nearly as lifeless as her he had saved.

It was some minutes ere the united efforts of all the party could restore animation to Cecile, during which time Desbrow, who had recovered from the momentary prostration of his strength, hung over her in distraction, pressing the water from her streaming tresses, and chafing her cold hands. By degrees her cheek assumed a less deadly tint, her heart again commenced its pulsations, and opening her languid eyes, she fixed them for a moment on Desbrow, with an expression of grateful tenderness which sank into his heart. She then closed them again, overcome by the exertion she had made, while a pearly drop escaped each snowy lid, and the lips moved as if speaking, though no sound escaped them.

Lord Ayrshire, in the warmth of his gratitude for the safety of Cecile, pressed again and again the hands of Desbrow.

"How shall I thank you? what shall we do to prove our gratitude?" exclaimed he, while Desbrow, returning the pressure, added—

"Am I not more than repaid in seeing her again restored to life?"

A servant was dispatched to Clydesdale Castle to order a carriage, and the necessary change of dress for Mademoiselle de Bethune, with strict injunctions to conceal the imminent danger to which she had been exposed, as Lord Ayrshire dreaded the effect it might produce on his wife, even though assured of her safety.

Cecile had now recovered, and was able to thank her preserver by words as well as by looks, but the latter were still more expressive; and when Desbrow pressed the hand she extended to him to his lips, it was not withdrawn, nay, he thought, but it might be only fancy, that a gentle pressure returned his ardent grasp.

This event, so nearly being attended by the most fatal consequences, produced an effect on the feelings of the two persons,—the saved and saver,—which it might have taken months to establish. Desbrow felt as if he was privileged

to hope that he might protect the life he had preserved; and Cecile, the pure-minded and affectionate Cecile, thought she was only obeying the dictates of gratitude, when she suffered her thoughts continually to revert to him, to whom, under heaven, she owed her safety.

Lord and Lady Ayrshire's feelings of thankfulness were as warm as their expressions of it, and Desbrow found himself treated by them not as a new acquaintance, but as an old and most valued friend, whose praises they were never tired of proclaiming. Happily no illness followed the accident; and a little languor, which stole nothing from the charms of Cecile's beautiful countenance, was all the injury she sustained from it.

Lady Madeline said, that "Mademoiselle de Bethune's recent accident resembled an incident in a novel. When I saw Mr. Desbrow," continued she, "with one arm supporting Mademoiselle de Bethune, and with the other cleaving the current, whose force threatened every

moment to overwhelm them, I thought it was just such a scene as one reads of."

"And I," said Lord Scamper, "was reminded of the famous day we had at Melton last year, when I swam the Smite on Sky Scraper, bearing the brush triumphantly, which I had twice risked my life to secure that day. It was a glorious sight."

Lady Jeanet put on a look of intense interest, and the gratified fox-hunter repaid it by increased attentions to her.

When the visit of the Ayrshires drew near its close, they invited Desbrow and his friend to accompany them to their seat in the neighbourhood,—an invitation too agreeable to be resisted.

The three weeks they had spent together at Clydesdale Castle, had cemented an affection which the brevity of the date of their acquaintance, under other circumstances, might never have achieved: and Desbrow only waited a favourable opportunity to declare his sentiments

to the fair object who had inspired them, and to demand her permission to make them known to Lord and Lady Ayrshire.

"How strange," said Lady Madeline to her sisters, "that Mademoiselle de Bethune, who took no pains whatever to captivate Mr. Desbrow, should have so completely succeeded in doing so, and in so short a time. I really begin to believe that it is better not to lay one's self out to please, and let things take their natural course; for if successful, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the success was not acquired at the expense of fatiguing efforts to win it; and if otherwise, one has not the mortification of feeling that our efforts to please have been practised in vain.

"I believe you are right," said Lady Jeanet, "for after all, there is nothing so tiresome as being always on the qui vive to please; we have danced all night to catch some booby who professed to dote on Terpsichore, and who having only claimed our hands for a night, has

claimed for life that of some indolent damsel, incapable of such a sacrifice. We have ridden over moor and mountain, fearless as Amazons, in the chase of the heart or hand of some modern Nimrod, who has bestowed it on some inanimate southern lass, who almost trembled to mount a pony. We have sung ourselves into hoarseness and sore throats, to witch with music, some *brutes*, over whom our harmonies produced less effect than did the sounds of Orpheus on his; and we have turned over albums of our drawings, until our fingers were as tired as our eyes in the operation, yet the amateurs have chosen wives who could draw nothing but their purse-strings. Let us then abandon all active exertions to gain husbands, and leave it to chance."

"Then we shall never get married," said Lady Rosina, poutingly; "recollect that Mr. Desbrow is quite unlike the generality of young men, and though Mademoiselle de Bethune captivated him, without any intention on her part,

she might not, nay, would not, have succeeded with the greater number of the men of our acquaintance; who, instead of making love, require to be made love to, and only bestow a portion of their attention on women, in gratitude for having occupied so much of theirs. Men are twenty times more fond of admiration than we are; while we require it only for our persons or accomplishments,—they demand it for their fortunes, positions, dress, equipages, horses, and all that is theirs, even to their *want* of accomplishments, of which, many of them are not a little vain, as witness how often we have been called on by some talentless booby, to join in his derision of some man of literary, musical, or conversational powers, while he thanked his stars that *he* was not of such. No, believe me, sister, that it is only by making men in love with *themselves*, that we make them fancy themselves in love with us."

"Suppose," said Lady Madeline, laughing, "that we add swimming to the list of our ac-

complishments; for you see, how useful a tumble into the river can be made. But I would advise a proficiency in the art of diving in the watery element being acquired, before the nymph tries the experiment, lest her attendant swains possess not the prowess of Mr. Desbrow."

"And so," said Lady Arden, "we have lost the fair Cecile, and, pire que cela, Lord Arlington and Mr. Desbrow, the modern Pylades and Orestes, have followed in her wake. Lord Arlington is a very gifted man, as men go now-a-days, and seemed to bear the absence of la dame de ses pensées, with great patience and resignation. Mr. Desbrow is quite an original, and if he fell into the hands of a clever woman something might be made of him; but, la belle Cecile, qui est douce comme un agneau, is not the person to turn the caterpillar into a butterfly, though she bids fair to convert the bachelor into a benedict."

CHAPTER VIII.

"The treasures of the deep are not so precious
As the concealed comforts of a man
Locked up in woman's love."

EACH day of Desbrow's stay at Lord Ayrshire's, only served to render him still more attached to Mademoiselle de Bethune. His affections having never been frittered away in casual flirtations, were as fervent as they were fresh and pure, and he loved, as those only can love, who have arrived at maturity without having wasted the powers of their hearts, or blunted the delicacy of their feelings.

A new world opened before him; and Cecile

was the enchantress that lent it all its charms. The future blessed with her, offered him but one bright vista, and without her, he dared not anticipate it. Nor was such a painful anticipation presented to him; for Cecile, the artless and pure-minded Cecile, was too unskilful in the world's wiles, to conceal the preference he had excited in her heart, though that preference was displayed with a delicacy that made it doubly flattering. Desbrow was ever by her side, her drawings were confided to him, she sang and played the simple airs, that charmed away many an evening hour; and he agreed with Lord and Lady Ayrshire, that if her voice wanted science, it amply compensated for it, in sweetness and pathos.

Lord Arlington had joined a party at the moors, for a fortnight, leaving Desbrow the enraptured guest of Lord Ayrshire; and never was there a happier circle than the party quarré, at Ayrshire Abbey presented.

A few days after Lord Arlington's departure, Desbrow, while riding by the side of Cecile, at a little distance from the Ayrshires, poured into her ear the impassioned tale of his love, and received her blushing consent to confide it to them. But though for many days she had anticipated his avowal, it now agitated her, bringing mixed tears of pain and pleasure to her eyes, and the hand she allowed Desbrow to press within his for a moment, trembled so much in his grasp, that in pity to her embarrassment, he did not attempt to raise it to his lips; and a look beaming with affection, repaid him for his delicacy.

The moment Cecile found herself alone with Lady Ayrshire, she threw herself into her arms; and with a shower of tears wept on the almost maternal bosom, that had been through infancy and girlhood, her refuge in joy or sorrow.—She told her of Desbrow's declaration. She wept not alone, for her kind friend, her second

mother, mingled tears with her's, as she anticipated her separation from the child of her affection, even though such a separation had always been inevitable; but they smiled through their tears, as they looked forward to constant meetings and spending many months of every year together.

Desbrow lost not a moment in laying his proposals before Lord Ayrshire, who warmly congratulated him on the choice he had made. It was agreed on that the Comte de Bethune should be immediately written to. Lord Ayrshire assured Desbrow, that there could be no doubt of his assent, as the proposal had been accepted by them; adding, that he should inform Cecile's father, that her suitor was all that a prudent parent could desire for his son-in-law.

The lovers being now considered affianced, and at liberty to mutually reveal their feelings, each day, each hour, added to their attachment, by making known qualities that

their increased intimacy developed. In Cecile de Bethune, the fastidious Desbrow found all that his imagination had ever pictured, or his reason approved of, in woman; while the dignified simplicity of his manners, and the high tone of his character and mind, were truly appreciated by her he had chosen.

When Arlington returned from the moors, he was no less surprised than gratified at observing the change in his friend and the cause that led to it; and while congratulating Desbrow, he could not resist demanding of him, if he were not now ready to admit the empire of the sly archer Love, whose shafts he had so long escaped.

In due time, a favourable answer arrived from the Comte de Bethune, giving his consent to the nuptials of his daughter, and requesting that, when they had taken place, Mr. Desbrow would bring her to France to visit him.

It was agreed that Desbrow should pro-

ceed to London to arrange the settlement with his lawyer, and that the Ayrshires were to follow him with their fair ward, in a fortnight after. But the morning of his departure an express arrived, stating that Mr. Beaumont, the guardian of Desbrow, was dangerously ill, and urging his immediate presence.

We will not dwell on the parting scene between the lovers; the sadness of which was increased by the tidings that had clouded the brow of Desbrow, who was sincerely attached to his guardian, and had prepared Cecile to like him.

All partings are melancholy between those who have sensitive hearts; because they are felt to be the avant couriers of that final parting on earth, when the survivor has the bitterest portion. Desbrow was obliged to summon all his self-command to his aid, when his travelling carriage drove round to the door, and he saw the cheek of his promised bride wear a paler hue, as a pearly tear stole down it. A sweet

smile which struggled through tears, as does the sun through the showers of the vernal April, beamed on the lovely face of Cecile, as she offered her velvet cheek to the lips of Desbrow. He then tore himself away from the breakfast room, astonished at the depth of his emotion, at quitting, for only a few days, her who was so shortly to be all his own.

He travelled night and day until he reached the mansion of Mr. Beaumont. An old servant met him in the vestibule; and to his hurried enquiry, answered that his poor master still lived, and was every hour demanding if Mr. Desbrow had arrived. Desbrow followed him to the sick chamber, where, stretched on the bed of death, lay the friend who had long been to him as a parent: his languid eyes, over which the glassy film of death was spread, turned with instinctive impulse to the door of the chamber when it opened; and "is he yet come?" broke from the pale lips of the dying man, as his heaving heart rose with unequal movement, and

his struggling breath almost refused to give an echo to his thoughts. His attenuated hands were convulsively plaiting the sheet that was turned over his coverlid, and the damps of death hung on his livid brow. A faint ray of joy illumined, for a moment, his sunken eyes, as they recognised Desbrow; his cold clammy hands returned the warm pressure of his young friend, as he gaspingly murmured, "I knew he would come—I knew he would come to—close my eyes—I am dying—my dear young friend—I have wrestled with death for the last few hours—because I wished to see you before I died—It is now nearly over,—but I die as I have lived, an advocate for civil and religious liberty."—

He paused; and a spasmodic pressure of the hand, and a convulsive movement of the muscles, followed by a heavy gasp, and a closing of the languid eye-lids, marked that the last struggle was over; and Desbrow looked on the inanimate remains of him who had, only a

moment before, welcomed his approach. He gazed long and attentively on that pale face, on which the impress of earthly passion still lingered; and, as he slowly withdrew from the chamber of death, he prayed that he might never be doomed to witness the closing scene of aught dearer to him in life, since that of his poor friend filled him with such regret.

When the will was opened, it was found that Mr. Beaumont had left the whole of his large fortune to Desbrow, with the exception of ten thousand pounds to her who had clouded the horizon of his life, but who had never been forgotten; liberal provisions to his servants, and large sums for the endowment of a school, into which *only* the children of persons belonging to the established church were to be admitted. A considerable legacy was also bequeathed for the institution of a charity, into which the poor of his estates were to be received, *on condition* that they always voted for their landlord, or the candidate proposed by him. Desbrow sighed,

as he read this record of the prejudices of him who died professing his love of civil and religious liberty.

In the desk of Mr. Beaumont was found a letter addressed to Desbrow, instructing him to examine and destroy all his private papers, and with it a small parcel, labelled "Notes from Frances." In lifting this parcel, a paper was discovered, containing a dried rose, almost reduced to dust, with an inscription nearly effaced, stating that it had been given him in June, 1788, by his dear Frances.

Love, disappointed love, was the secret of the misanthropy of poor Beaumont; and how many cases of misanthropy might be traced to similar causes, whose effects influence the lives of those who yield to them, long after the causes have ceased to be remembered. It is only susceptible natures that are liable to this species of infirmity, — an infirmity that always springs from disappointed affections, — and is therefore entitled to our pity, instead of

being, as it generally is, at once the source, and object of censure and calumny.

Desbrow felt a tear dim his eye, as it dwelt on this treasured relick of a first and only love,—this only flower,—in the wintry life of him who had preserved it; and he never felt so strong a sentiment of attachment towards his departed friend as at this moment, when the mementos of his tenderness of heart were before him. It is by the weaknesses, more than by their strength, that we are drawn towards our fellow-creatures; for, we not only all stand so much in need of pity and forbearance, but are generally so conscious of this necessity, that we find a chord in our hearts, which responds to that in others, when it vibrates beneath the dissonant touch of misfortune.

With what compassion did Desbrow now look back to the movements of misanthropy he had so often witnessed in his poor friend, and grieve that he had not shewn a more affectionate forbearance to them! Alas! we often pass our

lives with persons whose failings we should be more disposed to pity than resent, could we but know the causes that led to them; but such is our pride, or our mutual want of confidence, that, even in the intimacy of friendship, we rarely lay open our feelings, even to those who could sympathize in them.

Desbrow now found himself the possessor of vast wealth, as the fortune of Mr. Beaumont, joined to his own, rendered him one of the wealthiest commoners in England; but his desires were so moderate, and his former fortune so free from all incumbrances, that his accession gave him little pleasure. He reflected with deep regret that his marriage must now be postponed for some time, as the respect due to the memory of his guardian, who had been a second father to him, demanded this sacrifice.

He wrote to Lord Ayrshire, informing him of the death of Mr. Beaumont, and stating his feelings. He enclosed a letter for Cecile, in which, after pouring forth his whole heart to her,

he intreated her to reply to him immediately; and, having performed the last melancholy duty to the remains of his deceased friend, he endeavoured to beguile the weary hours by fulfilling, to the utmost extent of his power, the intentions of Mr. Beaumont.

Arlington, who had left him on his route from Scotland, had gone to pay a visit at Lord Vavasour's, where the news of Mr. Beaumont's death reached him. Knowing the affection that Desbrow had always entertained for his guardian, and sympathizing in the feelings of regret which he knew his loss would occasion him, he wrote to offer Desbrow a visit: but the latter declined it for the present, as he had so much business on his hands, that he wished to finish it ere he left Beaumont Park; and therefore postponed their meeting until the ensuing month in London, where business would require the presence of both.

Desbrow waited with impatience for letters from Ayrshire Abbey; but day after day passed

and not a letter arrived. At length, a week after the due time when an answer might have been expected to his letters, he was shocked and alarmed by receiving one with black-edged paper, and bearing all the insignia of death. Terror for some moments prevented his having the power to open it,—a thousand fearful thoughts passed through his mind,—his hand shook, and a presentiment of some heavy calamity took possession of him; and such was the overpowering effect of his agitation, that when he had torn open the letter, and saw the signature of Cecile, he clasped his hands, and uttered ejaculations of joy and thankfulness that she was safe. He once more took up the letter, and became filled with sorrow, when he perused the few lines in which the heart-stricken girl informed him that she had lost her second mother,—her dear and inestimable friend, Lady Ayrshire,—who had been hurried to the tomb by a violent cold, which, terminating in a fever, had in a few days, put an end to her valuable

existence. Lord Ayrshire, she added, was incapable of writing, and she felt nearly unequal to the melancholy task that devolved on her.

Desbrow read the letter over and over again; it was the first he had ever received from Cecile; and a superstitious feeling which, in his present depressed spirits he could not subdue, stole over him, as he reflected that her first letter was to announce death,—a sombre omen, thought he, for the future. The grief under which it was written precluded even the indications of that confidential and authorized affection, which previously to their separation they had so frankly and happily indulged. At each perusal he thought the style still more frigid and restrained, and blamed her for not even by implication referring to their position; forgetful that it was written in the house of death and mourning, and that grief alone occupied her who sent it, chasing away, for the moment, every other feeling.

Is it the presentiment of the brevity of sor-

row that makes the mourner adhere with such tenacity to the first indulgence of its violence: when turning from all the consolation that love or friendship can offer, the heart and the imagination unite in cherishing the regret that is but the more bitter because it is vain?

Alas! such is our weakness, that even the violence of our emotions exhausts the grief they evince; and we live to feel that the very deepest, truest regret may be subdued by time, though it leaves wounds whose cicatrices are ineffaceable. Who that has lost an object dear to the affections, but has felt the self-reproach, the remorse, with which we turn from the first indications of forgetfulness, as we ask ourselves, if it is *thus* we can forget all that was, and was most dear. Unstable must that mind be which views not life with an altered eye, after death has snatched from our circle some individual who made its happiness. That confidence in the possibility of the duration of earthly enjoyment, which in itself is happiness, has fled

for ever, when we have bent over the cold remains of one we loved; for then, comes the reflection, that so may perish every tie that binds us to life; and the mysterious chain by which memory links us to the loved dead, awakening thoughts which they once shared, precludes our forgetting that the flowers of earth only shade the graves that yawn beneath them.

Desbrow wrote to Cecile, and, from respect to her feelings of grief, suppressed every sentiment foreign to them. How did he wish that he was near her, to share, if not lighten her sorrow! How did he desire to utter the thousand fond condolences which he could not write! But he dared not intrude on the privacy of Lord Ayrshire at such a moment unbidden; and was therefore forced to restrain his impatience.

In a few weeks, came a letter from Lord Ayrshire, informing him that the Comte de Bethune was daily expected in Scotland, to take Cecile

to France; "so not only (wrote the bereaved husband) have I lost *her*, who made the happiness of my life, but I am about to lose Cecile, whom I have so long considered as my daughter. I could have parted with her to you without a murmur; but, I confess, I like not to see her carried away, even by a father, to France, before that nuptial knot is tied, which is to unite for ever her destiny with England. If you dread not to come to the house of mourning, let us see you here, as the sooner you make acquaintance with the Comte de Bethune the better; and I am sure you will wish to bid farewell to Cecile before she leaves England.

"Man proposes, but God disposes, my dear young friend. When we parted a few weeks ago, how anxiously did we all look forward to our next meeting! and *she* whom I have lost, how did she picture a cheerful future, to be passed in constant interchange of visits, at our mutual houses. She has sought 'the narrow

house,' and left me, in the winter of life, deprived of the sunshine her presence cast over my existence for so many happy years."

No sooner did Desbrow receive Lord Ayrshire's letter, than he determined to set off for Scotland without delay. A presentiment of impending evil, connected with Cecile's return to France, weighed on his spirits, which he sought in vain to conquer, and he felt dissatisfied with himself at not being able to vanquish this superstitious fancy. With what different feelings did he pursue his journey to Scotland, to those with which he left it a few weeks before. Death had been busy with those near and dear to him in that brief period; and though love still reigned in his heart, grief had sobered down his joyful anticipations, and reminded him of the fearful uncertainty of their realization—an uncertainty, which a few days before, he could not have brought himself to even apprehend. It was impossible to have lived in the same society with Lady Ayrshire, on the terms

of cordial intimacy with which Desbrow had been received, without having formed for her a sincere friendship. His love for Cecile had grown beneath her eye, and had been fostered by her motherly encouragement; her benign presence was associated with all that he had yet known of pure happiness, and his regret for her loss was as deep as it was well founded.

CHAPTER IX.

"Dans la lutte établie entre l'amour et la vanité, il est rare que la victoire ne reste pas à celle-ci."

While Desbrow was pursuing his route to Ayrshire Abbey, his friend Arlington was yielding to the fascinations of the Lady Emily Vavasour, the fair daughter of his host, whose beauty had attracted him, and whose talents and amiability had fixed his hitherto volatile heart.

For some time he was unconscious that any stronger sentiment than a lively admiration, actuated his feelings towards her; for so decided had been his preference for Lady Walmer, and

so frequently did the recollection of her obtrude itself on his mind, that he believed his passion for her was still unsubdued, till the anxiety which the marked attention of Lord Mordaunt to Lady Emily excited in his feelings, soon revealed to him the state of his heart, and he now turned his whole thoughts to the endeavour of securing an interest in her's. The Lady Emily Vavasour to great personal beauty, united talents of no mean order, and a temper as remarkable for its sweetness, as were her manners for their polished elegance. Though an only child, and like all such, brought up in the lap of indulgence, by parents who idolized her, she was as totally unspoilt as if she had been the seventh daughter of a Scotch laird or an English curate. Fondly attached to her parents, she had reached her eighteenth year without having known an hour of sorrow, or a wish ungratified. Her mother, a woman of strong religious principles, had early instilled into the mind of her child, that only sure guide

to peace—religion. It was the basis on which her conduct was founded and her hopes built; and its blessed effects were visible in the strict discharge of all her duties, and the peaceful tenour of her life.

The personal and mental superiority of Arlington, over his would-be rival, soon won for him the preference of Lady Emily; and in a short time, he was received by her and her family, as her accepted suitor. He had now the enviable privilege of devoting nearly all his time and attention to his fair betrothed; and each day rendered them mutually more dear. His father approved his choice, and offered the most liberal settlements; and all promised happiness for the future; when, one morning at the breakfast table, Lord Vavasour received a letter, announcing the visit of Lord and Lady Walmer, who wrote to say they were on their route to the Duke of D———'s, and would stay a day or two, at Vavasour Hall.

Nothing could be more unwelcome to Arling-

ton than this rencontre. His first impulse was to leave the house under some pretence or other, and so avoid a meeting with Lady Walmer; but as she was to arrive that day, and that he had received no letters, he could have made no excuse for going away so suddenly that would not have had an extraordinary appearance. So sincere was his attachment to Lady Emily, that it had wholly triumphed over his former passion for Lady Walmer, and it was only from a wish of not giving the latter pain, that he desired to shun an interview which he now felt could no longer have any danger for him. He determined to treat her with marked respect, but to avoid all chances of explanation, or confidential intercourse. A resolution which he concluded it would be almost unnecessary to form, as Lady Walmer would naturally conduct herself towards him with all that cold politeness, which their relative positions required. Still he anticipated the meeting with no pleasurable feelings: —there is always a gau-

cherie in encountering a person once loved, and to whom the strongest professions of attachment have been made, when that love is transferred to another object. A sense of shame at one's own inconstancy, embarrasses the person vis-à-vis to a former flame, and this sentiment will aways be felt in proportion to the inconstant's natural kindness of heart.

"It is strange," said Lady Emily, "that often as Lord and Lady Walmer have been invited here, they never have paid us a visit before, and now come unasked. We are surely more than twenty miles out of the route to the Duke of D———'s, which makes their visit more extraordinary."

"I never before heard you, my dear Emily, make so inhospitable a reflection," said Lord Vavasour, "and we are but the more obliged to the Walmers for coming twenty miles out of their way to give us their company for a day or two."

Lady Emily looked as if she could have well

dispensed with the obligation, though had she been asked why, she could hardly have given a reason. The truth was, she felt so happy, that she wished for no change in the circle around her, and least of all, the addition to it of persons with whom she was but slightly acquainted.

During the morning, Arlington felt unsettled and unhinged; the society of Lady Emily seemed for the first time to fail in occupying his thoughts, which, in spite of him, recurred continually to the expected guest.

How would she receive him? and what would be her opinion at discovering, which she could not fail to do, that the passionate love, professed for herself some ten weeks before, was now transferred to another? And she too, compelled to be a witness to his inconstancy! How unfortunate that she should come! But then, perhaps, Lady Walmer had as completely conquered her predilection for him, as he had his, for her. In that case, indeed, all would be

well, and friendship and goodwill might take the place of warmer feelings. But no! and here vanity, that self-flatterer, whispered, that her's was not a passion to be so soon cured;—and a pang of self-reproach shot through the generous feelings of Arlington as he contemplated her possible chagrin, that almost atoned for the egotism which led him to believe in the continuance of her attachment,—a supposed fidelity, which had he analyzed his sentiments, he would have attributed more to the belief of his own merits, than to her stability.

More than once, during the day, Lady Emily, observing his abstraction, rallied him on it, and it required a considerable effort to force himself to reply to her plaisanteries.

Lord and Lady Walmer arrived at the hour usually chosen by people of tact to make their appearance in a country house,—namely, that devoted to dressing for dinner; when an arrival breaks in on no one's occupations, and the first interview with the persons composing the society,

is in the drawing-room or library, just in time to permit the greetings of reception, before the maître d'hotel announces that dinner is served. People then appear in fresh garments and fresh looks, take their places naturally, and give just enough excitement, by the mille petits riens et on dit, that new comers have to communicate, to render their presence not merely an addition, but an acquisition to enliven the monotony of a country house. Not so arrive the unsophisticated persons, unblessed with tact, whom some luckless host is compelled to invite to his chateau. A fear of being too late for Lord Rochfort, who is so punctual, induces them to start on their journey three hours' too soon, and they drive up to the door flushed and heated, with uncurled locks and dresses chiffonnés, just as the hostess and her guests are about to ascend the carriage for their late morning drive.

The dame du chateau must give up her drive, to remain and act the civil, heartily wishing

the new comers twenty miles off;—it is too early for them to dress for dinner, and too late to make a change in their tumbled toilettes.

They hope they do not interrupt Lady Rochfort's drive, and entreat her not to stand on ceremony with them, half an hour after the carriages have driven away; and the poor hostess having offered them refreshments, abandons herself to the interminable and inane remarks of the lady guests, while the husband looks out of the window, and wonders when Lord Rochfort will return from shooting, reminding his wife every half hour, how unnecessary her haste had been, and shewing how heavy the pressure of time hangs on his hands, by beating a tattoo on the window frame and tables by the way of beguiling it. They are too tired to walk, but not sufficiently so to retire to their chambers to refresh and repose themselves, as their considerate hostess has more than once proposed; and she is only relieved from her thraldom by the ringing of the first

dinner bell, when, half dead with ennui, and already heartily tired of her new guests, she seeks the privacy of her dressing-room, and vents in yawns, suppressed during the two last tedious hours, her decouragement morale.

Other visitors of the same class, sin in a different way. Afraid to arrive too soon, and be in Lady Rochfort's way, they set out an hour too late: the second dinner bell has rung as they drive to the door, but in rushing to their apartments, they beg the groom of the chambers to assure my lady that they will be ready in fifteen minutes. The message is delivered, not sotto voce, and excites the dismay of all the assembled company, who know what fifteen minutes mean, when imperials, chaise seats, and bonnet boxes have to be taken *down* from the carriage, and *up* to the dressing-rooms, unpacked and huddled on by the cold fingers of a half-frozen lady's maid, nearly dislocated from the motion of the dickey-box or rumble-tumble, and who

has forgotten where half the finery most wanted has been stowed away.

Some of the guests are in horror at the anticipation of the spoiled dinner; and others, more fastidious, are shocked at the notion of a fifteen minutes' toilette, after a dusty or dirty road, and being shut up so many hours, when the necessary ablutions alone would require more than that brief period; but all are discomposed, and put out of humour. The pendule, on the chimney, is often anxiously regarded; and when thrice fifteen minutes have elapsed, the luckless visitors enter the library, with heightened colour, which has divided itself, with impartiality, between their noses and cheeks, "making the white one red," and draperies and garnitures as ruffled as their tempers. But here, end not the miseries; for, in breathless haste, Madame Mére pours forth an endless volley of apologies, excuses, and demands for pardon. "She is so shocked,—so sorry,—but

the roads were so bad, the post-horses so tired, and they had no idea it was so late." Another quarter of an hour is thus filled up, until the overpowered hostess, and hungry guests, their last remnant of patience exhausted, are summoned to the salle-à-manger, where, overdone venison, and tepid or rechauffées entrées, keep alive the resentments of the gourmands, and the displeasure of the lord and lady of the banquet, to the tactless causes of their spoiled dinner.

Never did Lady Walmer look more lovely, than when Arlington's eyes fell on her as he entered the library, and the bright colour which tinged her cheek, while he offered his compliments to her, added to her loveliness, as well as to the interest it excited for her in his breast. When her hand touched his, he thought its movement tremulous; though the truth was, the tremulousness was in *his* hand, and not in *her's*. But she was more

accurate in her judgment of this point; and from it, deduced that her power over him was not yet destroyed. This belief lent a greater softness to her manner; and, when their eyes met, the long and pensive look, which seemed as if it would reach his inmost soul, and expressed all the affection of her's, made him tremble while he turned from its unequivocal tenderness, to seek the mild and less practised glances of his Emily.

At dinner, he was placed vis-à-vis to Lady Walmer, whose varying colour, and agitated looks, whenever he addressed Lady Emily, by whom he was seated, betrayed the pain she felt; and the consciousness of this, imposed a degree of reserve on Arlington, that rendered his position peculiarly awkward. He had now the conviction that he was still beloved by Lady Walmer: and though good feeling, as well as good sense, prompted the wish that it had not been so; still, vanity, that insepa-

rable companion of the human breast, made him feel a complacency at the conviction, and a warm gratitude towards the object that administered to his self-love. Had Lady Walmer treated him with haughtiness, or indifference, he could better have brooked her presence: but now, could he be so barbarous, so unfeeling, as to wound the heart of a woman who loved him, by attentions to another, which proved the transfer of his affection? No! the restraint could only last two days; she would then depart, and, probably, the unsophisticated Emily, in that short period, would not be aware of the decrease of his attentions.

So reasoned Arlington, during the time of dinner; and though he would have willingly risked wounding Lady Walmer's feelings, in preference to offending Emily, he had not courage to pay the latter any of the countless and nameless acts of prevenance, which she had been for weeks accustomed to receive from him. Every

time he turned his eyes to the opposite side of the table, and, truth to say, that was continually, he found those of Lady Walmer fixed on him. Emily being by his side, he could not, without a movement of his head, which would have excited anew the agitation and distress of Lady Walmer, observe the sweet countenance of his affianced wife, or the changes produced in it by his unwonted abstraction and coldness. Had he looked on it, he would have been recalled to a sense of his weakness; but, as it was, he yielded to a false sentiment of pity, springing more from his own vanity, than any other source. When the ladies rose from table, instead of seeking the eyes of Emily, he found himself reading in those of her rival, her thanks for his forbearance: but turning from their too eloquent expression, to catch the retreating figure of Emily, whose languid movements, and dejected air, spoke reproaches to his heart,

he ardently pined for an opportunity of again devoting all his attentions to her, free from the jealous observation of Lady Walmer.

CHAPTER X.

"Half the errors attributed to love have their source only in vanity; and many a woman has made sacrifices to this unworthy passion, who might have successfully resisted the pleadings of affection."

Lady Walmer had perception enough to be aware that her only chance of retaining her influence over Arlington, was to affect a violent passion for him. Bent on this purpose, she became blind to the risks to which the fulfilment of it would inevitably expose her. And here, was a proof that vanity sometimes triumphs over pride in woman's heart, as well as in man's.

Her preference for Arlington, though the strongest, and perhaps the only permanent one she had ever known, would not have injured her peace of mind, had her vanity not been wounded by his having had the power to fly from her, even at the moment when she acknowledged that he was dear to her. Had he fled in despair at her coldness, she could have borne it; but as it was, it was too mortifying, and she determined, coute qui coute, to win him back, if only to prove to him, that when again at her feet, she could banish him for ever.

Day after day, during the first month of his absence, she expected a letter, breathing repentance for his flight, and intreating to be again restored to her favour; but when week after week passed without a line from him, her indignation knew no bounds. Lady Walmer was incapable of appreciating the character or conduct of Arlington, and consequently misjudged both so completely, as to attribute his flight to a want

of affection, derogatory to the power of her fascination; instead of viewing it as a proof of his triumph over himself, in sacrificing his feelings to her peace.

Some remarks made by Lord Walmer on the sudden departure of Arlington, goaded the irritable vanity of his wife; who having been proud of displaying her conquest, was humiliated that even her husband should think her adorers could thus easily throw off her chains.

Such was the state of her feelings when intelligence reached London, that Arlington was on the eve of marriage with Lady Emily Vavasour. To paint her anger, would be impossible; rage, jealousy, and a sense of humiliation filled her breast, and being compelled to conceal her emotions, they preyed but the more deeply on her ill-governed mind. The envious belles, who had disputed with her the conquest of Arlington, now flocked round to comment on his approaching marriage, to repeat a thousand ex-

aggerated tales of his long and devoted passion for Lady Emily: the immense settlements he had offered, and the splendid diamonds he had commanded. His attachment was represented as something quite worthy of the days of romance: and Lady Emily was pronounced by these soi disant friends of Lady Walmer, a most fortunate woman, to have gained the heart of such a man, especially when it was taken into consideration how many women had sought it, by encouraging his attentions. None of this malice lost its effect on her whom it was meant to wound: she felt—poignantly felt it—until it rankled in her very soul, exciting her to sacrifice pride, delicacy, and every feminine feeling of propriety, to the accomplishment of the only scheme that promised a salve to her wounded vanity,—that, of again securing Arlington's affections, and shewing the envious women who taunted her, how easily she could make him resume her chains.

But while revolving this plan, she was not forgetful that the eyes of all her clique were upon her; and this weak woman, who was incapable of conquering the feelings of wounded vanity, concealed with a Spartan firmness, worthy of a good cause, the anguish it inflicted. Nay, she affected to be pleased at the marriage; said she had long known of the attachment, for that Lord Arlington had made her his confidant; an assertion that excited an exchange of sundry malicious glances between the ladies composing her audience, none of which escaped her observation, though she pretended not to remark them. She dwelt with exaggeration on the qualities, mental and personal, of Lady Emily, with whom she was but slightly acquainted, and, proclaimed that two such amiable and accomplished persons could not fail to be happy.

This ruse imposed on no one, save Lord Walmer, on whom it took entire effect; and he felt much gratified, as the confession of his wife's

having been Arlington's confidant, seemed now to explain, most satisfactorily to him, all the causes of their former long interviews and habits of intimacy, which had often excited his surprise, if not his jealousy.

But all was now explained; and feeling more cordially disposed towards his wife than he had been for a long time, he yielded a ready assent to her proposal of accepting an invitation to the Duke of D - -, which he had previously nearly determined on declining.

Lady Walmer had felt as little inclination as her lord, to go to the duke's, until she recollected that Lord Vavasour's seat was only twenty miles out of the route, which would furnish her with an excuse for accepting an invitation often given, of staying a few days there. She frankly proposed this visit to her lord, who readily agreed to it, but she determined on not announcing her intention to Lord Vavasour, until she was on the eve of making it, lest Ar-

lington might take flight; as she guessed he could feel no wish of encountering her, under present circumstances.

To win back her recreant knight, and to exhibit him to her clique, was now the end and aim of all this weak woman's plans; and she never paused to ask herself if, in pursuing her schemes, the happiness of the young and amiable Lady Emily, as well as that of Arlington, might not be sacrificed. No! She thought not of them; self, and self only, was consulted, and, for the gratification of her vanity, she was ready to imolate all that opposed its triumph.

Lady Walmer was not naturally a bad hearted or wicked person, and if, a few months before, any one could have foretold her, that she would act as she was now doing, she would have despised the prediction and felt insulted by the prophet; but vanity, her ruling passion, she had never even endeavoured to control, and so long had she yielded to its empire, that it now

wholly governed her. Instigated by this mean and unworthy passion, which has led more women to ruin than all others beside, she now fearlessly obeyed its dictates; and determined to leave nothing undone to recover her empire over Arlington, who, unconscious of her real character, attributed that to affection, which proceeded from vanity alone; and his own self-love being flattered by it, he pitied what, had he known her real sentiments, he would have despised.

Into how many snares does not vanity lead us, and how often, for the indulgence of that evil passion in ourselves, do we administer to that of others! Had he not been blinded by his own fatuity, he would have seen that Lady Walmer's present conduct was as inconsistent with true affection as it was with female delicacy; and he would have at once discouraged her impropriety of conduct, by continuing his attentions to her innocent and amiable rival. But

men are as prone to believe in the force and durability of the passions they inspire, as are weak women; and hence, are oftener the victims of their vanity than of their affections.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Arlington found that Lady Walmer had established a tête-à-tête on a sofa, with Lady Emily; leaving Lady Vavasour and the wife of the rector, who had joined the party, to amuse themselves in a similar manner. This manœuvre precluded the possibility of Arlington's having an opportunity of saying a word in private to Lady Emily, and had been calculated upon, and arranged accordingly, by the wily Lady Walmer.

Nothing could be so disadvantageous to Emily, as the contrast she now afforded to her rival, who, elated with the success of her glances at dinner, was blooming and brilliant in beauty, while Emily's cheek wore a paler hue, and her eyes looked languid and heavy, as their

downcast lids tried to veil them from the searching gaze of Lady Walmer, who seemed as if she would have read her inmost thoughts. We must, in justice to Arlington, add, that the pallid cheek and heavy eyes of Emily, though thus brought into forcible and disadvantageous contrast with the blooming tint and sparkling eyes of Lady Walmer, never had more attraction for him than at this moment, when they disclosed how deep must be the sentiment of attachment for himself, which could so soon subdue her natural vivacity, and shade the brilliant character of her beauty. Lady Walmer was too quick sighted not to observe the deep interest which the pensive looks of Emily had awakened, and too clever not to try and divert the attention of her lover to some other point; she, therefore, proposed music, and asked Emily to sing, though one glance at her countenance must have betrayed that such an exertion at the present moment would be impossible. A head-ache, that

never failing apology for a heart-ache, was offered as an excuse for Emily's refusal; and Lady Walmer proposed to accompany herself on the piano, that Lady Emily might hear one or two new songs, of which she spoke in high terms. Arlington now hoped that while Lady Walmer was singing, he might have an opportunity of saying a few words in private to Emily, and, therefore, expressed a desire to hear the song or songs to which she alluded; but no sooner did she rise to go to the piano, than she took the arm of Emily, and, at the same moment, called to Arlington to place the music stool for her.

This behest performed, while she was playing the symphony, he turned to Emily, and with a look, in which the whole tenderness of his heart was displayed, in a low voice, hoped she was not very ill, and that her head-ache would soon subside. The look and manner that accompanied these words, carried a balm

to the feelings of her to whom they were addressed: and she thanked him with one of her sweetest smiles, while replying that she was sure a night's sleep would perfectly restore her to her accustomed health.

Softly as the few words which passed between the lovers had been spoken, they reached the listening ears of Lady Walmer, and excited a jealous rage in her breast, whose intensity surprised her. Admirably, however, suppressing all exhibition of it, she playfully requested Arlington to lead Lady Emily in front of her, adding, that she was foolishly nervous, and never could sing if people were behind her.

When they had complied with her request, and that both were so placed that every glance of her's could command them, she commenced the following song, fixing her eyes on Arlington's face, with an expression of deep melancholy, that well accorded with the plaintive sound of her low-toned and melodious voice,

every intonation of which struck reproaches to the mind of Arlington, as she seemed to address him.

"Yes! I have loved thee but too well,
My very soul was giv'n to thee;
But thou'st dissolved the magic spell,
And set my captive fond heart free.

But, as some hapless bird confined,
With pinions long unused to soar,
In liberty no charms would find,
Nor pine to mount in air once more,

So feel I, for this heart was thine,
So long thou didst its feelings sway;
Its bitterness alone is mine,
For thou hast stol'n its peace away

To describe the effect of this song upon Arlington, every line of which, was aided by all the expression that the touching voice and beautiful countenance of the singer could give

it, would be impossible. He felt as if every eye and ear in the room must detect in it, all that Lady Walmer meant him alone to comprehend. Nor was he reassured when, stealing a look at Emily, he saw astonishment and pain depicted on every lineament of her intelligent face.

When the song ended, and before Lady Walmer could receive the compliments of the few of her auditors who felt disposed to pay her any, Lady Vavasour left her seat, and approaching her daughter, drew her arm within her's, and gently led her from the room. Arlington would have given worlds to have followed them, and to have helped to support the tottering steps of his beloved Emily; but he felt that were he to do so, Lady Walmer was capable of making some scene, which would only serve to compromise herself and him, and, therefore, remained in the salon.

Lord Vavasour happily relieved him from a

tête-à-tête with Lady Walmer, which she had evidently resolved to effect; and that good-natured, but somewhat obtuse man, having complimented her on her voice, lamented the indisposition of his daughter, which, he said, he could in no way account for; as, in general, she was the most healthy, as well as the most cheerful person, in the world; "but," continued the fond father, "all you ladies, on certain occasions, are apt to be agitated,"—here both his listeners looked alarmed,—"and the period fixed for the marriage of Emily, and my friend,"—laying his hand affectionately on the shoulder of Arlington,—"now draws so near, that one must not wonder if my poor Emily, in the midst of all her happiness, sometimes feels a few pangs at the thoughts of leaving her doting parents. You will forgive this, won't you, my dear Arlington? for, be assured, she who feels the most regret at leaving her father's home, will be the

most likely to make that of her husband a scene of happiness."

Lady Walmer writhed under the emotions this speech was so well calculated to call forth; and was incapable of any other reply than a bow of assent: while Arlington studiously avoided her glance, feeling unable to support the reproaches he was convinced it would convey.

When Lady Vavasour returned to the salon, her manner towards Lady Walmer was so coldly reserved, that even Arlington, pre-occupied as he was, could not help being struck with it, and pitied the embarrassment it evidently caused that lady. He approached Lady Vavasour, and expressed his hope that she left Lady Emily better; but a stern look, and freezing reply, that she was doing well, discouraged him from any further conversation.

The rest of the evening passed away as

dully as all evenings do, between people who have few ideas in common, and when no one in the circle has the power or the inclination, pour faire des frais, for amusing the rest.

CHAPTER XI.

"Les femmes abandonnées par l'amour, dévotes par nécessité, méchantes par temperament, et medisantes par envie."

MRS. PRESTON, the rector's wife, or lady, as she loved to be called, who had been engaged in private conversation with Lady Vavasour during the evening, had not been an unmindful, or unprejudiced spectatress of the conduct of Lady Walmer during dinner, and the soirée that followed it. She was one of those observant, and loquacious ladies, of which almost every country town offers an example, who

are much prone to examine the actions and words of those with whom they come in contact, and to communicate the results of their examinations, with all their comments thereupon. An extreme activity of mind, never turned to any laudable pursuit, left Mrs. Preston ample time and resources, for making herself au fait of all the private histories of every family of her acquaintance; and her visits were received by the ladies of her neighbourhood, who happened to have gossiping propensities, with the same satisfaction with which a certain Sunday newspaper is opened by many of its readers, who are dying to see what is said of their intimate friends and acquaintances.

Mrs. Preston had passed her years of maidenhood as dame de compagnie, with the Dowager Marchioness of Chatterwell, where her quick perception of character enabled her to fill the role of critic to the guests, and admirer to the

hostess and her daughter, to the full satisfaction of the two latter. By a peculiarity of optics, she saw nothing but defects in the visitors, and naught but perfections in her protectresses; and when the clerical preceptor of the marquis, (the only son of his doting mother,) was to be presented with the lucrative living of Chatterwell, as a reward for his services, the hand of the precise Miss Dunstan was the only stipulation to the gift proposed by the marchioness, to the luckless prelate.

The Lady Elizabeth was on the point of marriage; the dame de compagnie was to be got rid of handsomely; the preceptor was to be provided for, and the two last points in the programme of the marchioness' plans were to be accomplished by making the living of the parson provide a living for the toady.

They equally disliked each other, but what was to be done?—nothing but to marry, and continue their mutual dislike under the small roof

of the rectory, as they had done under the aristocratic one of Chatterwell during so many years.

The Lady Elizabeth was now Countess of Elesmere, a woman of fashion, and would-be beauty, who had disputed the conquest of Arlington's heart with Lady Walmer, and who had never forgiven his preference of the latter. His subsequent departure from London, and the news of his approaching marriage, had gratified her, in the belief that both were highly mortifying to her rival. She it was who had taunted Lady Walmer, by repeating every particular she could learn or invent, relative to the intended marriage; and, recollecting that her ci-devant toady was now a near neighbour of the Vavasours, she wrote to acquire all the information she could from her Argus, in return, communicating the former supposed liaison of Arlington and Lady Walmer, with a prohibition not to mention it to Lady Vavasour, which she knew would have precisely the contrary

effect, as the mischief-loving propensities of Mrs. Preston were well known to her.

"I hope," (wrote Lady Elesmere,) "that Lord Arlington has entirely conquered his passion for my coquettish friend; but such is her power over him, that I should tremble, were I Lady Emily, to let him come again within reach of this syren."

Lady Elesmere dispatched this letter the day she had discovered the intention of the Walmers to stay a few days at Vavasour Castle, on their way to the Duke of D——'s, an intention which her lord heard Lord Walmer communicate to some of his clique at White's, and which Lord Elesmere repeated to his wife. She felt sure, that not only would Lady Walmer find a severe observer in Mrs. Preston, but that all she knew, guessed, or feared, would, under the seal of secresy, be disclosed to Lady Vavasour; who, being a woman more remarkable for severity of morals, than perception of character,

or clearness of intellect, was precisely the person most likely to be influenced by such a disclosure, and to make a use of it little calculated to administer to the happiness of the persons most concerned.

All had occurred as the artful Lady Elesmere had foreseen and wished. Furnished with the clue sent in her letter, Mrs. Preston interpreted every glance and movement of Lady Walmer and Arlington into a proof of passed guilt and present attachment. "Her dear, sweet, innocent Lady Emily was a victim about to be offered up, and she ought, she would, save her."

No sooner had she found herself tête-à-tête, in a corner with Lady Vavasour, than she began to animadvert on Lady Walmer, until, by degrees, she had made her hostess acquainted with all she had heard, suspected, or imagined; so that when the song was given, accompanied by the tender glances, and impassioned manner

that marked its performance, it seemed, to the prejudiced feelings of Lady Vavasour, a convincing proof of the truth of all that she had been hearing for the last two hours.

Observing the effect the song produced on her daughter, she rose, as already related, and led her from the room; and it required no little self-command on her part to resist expressing her sentiments to Emily; who sought her pillow with that overpowering, though vague, sense of unhappiness, which oppresses the young and sensitive heart, when it first yields to doubt or suspicion, and admits these insidious passions into the sanctuary where love and confidence had before only been known.

The impassioned glances of Lady Walmer, fixed with such intensity on Arlington, her affianced husband, haunted her imagination; the words of the song, so boldly, so unfemininely, addressed to him, seemed still to sound in her ears; and his evident constraint ever since Lady

Walmer's arrival, announced even to her unsophisticated mind some understanding between them, inimical to her peace. Then came the recollection of the visible perturbation of her mother, and the offended air with which she led her from the saloon. All this must have some cause, and her parent must have seen much to disapprove ere she would have been so evidently ruffled. And here, tears, the first that love had ever brought into her eyes, flowed in abundance.

Fondly, and entirely had she allowed herself to love Arlington; and her parents had unreservedly sanctioned the attachment, which a few weeks would have seen ratified at the altar,—but now—and her tears streamed afresh—it was but too evident, another had claims on his heart, and that other, a married woman.

The high sense of moral rectitude of Emily was as much wounded as her affection; she had never mixed in any society, but of those whose

conduct was irreproachable; had never been initiated into the scandalous histories, which, whether true or false, equally tend to sully the mind accustomed to hear them; hence the shock of seeing her betrothed husband claimed as a lover, by a married woman, inflicted a deep wound on her peace.

She had so often heard Arlington express his abhorrence of vice, and had so frequently found his moral and religious sentiments accordant with her own, that she now shrank from the idea of contemplating him in such a new, such a different point of view; and she passed the first sleepless hours of her life, in weeping over her delusion. And yet, in the midst of bitter thoughts, came the consoling one, that he had not returned the passionate glances of Lady Walmer. No! Emily had observed, with woman's instinctive quickness, that he seemed to shrink from, rather than return them: and this recollection was soothing.

Yes; he must love her; he could not forget all the vows they had exchanged, all the plans for the future, they had arranged together. He was too happy before Lady Walmer came, to admit of Emily's doubting that his thoughts reverted to any one but her; and with this consolatory thought, she closed her weary and tearful eyes in slumber.

To a deep sensibility, Emily Vavasour united the rare accompaniment of a most sweet and equal temper; and, though possessed of a degree of feminine softness, which might lead superficial observers to conclude that she was deficient in firmness, she was yet, by no means wanting in that essential quality; a quality as different from its mean substitute, obstinacy, as rashness is from true courage, prudery from virtue, and bigotry from religion.

She felt, even while her heart was agonized at the thought, that she could separate herself for ever from Arlington, were she convinced

that he was unworthy her affection; but she prayed that this conviction might never be forced on her.

First love in an elevated mind, is pure as the first breath of the morning zephyr, and beautiful as Hope, ere it has learnt to doubt.

Emily's purity and confidence chased away the doubts that had clouded her mind, as the sun dispels the vapours that would obscure its brilliancy, and she slept the slumber of innocence; that light and peaceful sleep, which never descends on the lids of guilt, and rarely visits those on whom passion has left its burning trace.

Visions of happiness were present to her imagination; Arlington led her through verdant meads, where a thousand fragrant flowers courted her touch; and his voice, uttering vows of love, came to her ear, mingled with the joy-inspiring notes of innumerable birds. Her father smiled on her, and her mother blessed

her. Thus, the pure imagination of this young and charming girl presented to her even in sleep, the images most dear and attractive to her innocent mind.

Lady Vavasour no sooner found herself alone with her lord, which happened not ere they had sought their pillows, than the nuptial couch was made, as it too frequently is, the bed of thorns, by being chosen as the scene of domestic jars, unpleasant disclosures, and painful consultations; hence the alarm entertained by so many bachelors, who renounce the smiles of the saffron-robed god from the bare apprehension of "curtain lectures."

All that Mrs. Preston had stated, relative to Arlington's former passion for Lady Walmer, was now repeated to Lord Vavasour, with the high colouring given by a prudish woman and an affectionate mother, alarmed for the happiness of her only child.

Lord Vavasour had lived much in the gay

world in his youth, and had learned to look on certain liaisons in it, with a charity, little in accordance with the severity of his wife's principles; so that a difference of opinion often arose between them, which, the laxity of his notions, and the over-prudishness of her's, rendered as dangerous to harmony, as it was unavailing to carry conviction to the mind of either. The first pause which the volubility of Lady Vavasour allowed, was filled up by her lord bursting into a laugh, and exclaiming,

"Stuff!—nonsense! my dear; how can you listen to such gossip? How like that interfering busybody, Mrs. Preston, to come here and fill your ears with tales of forgotten scandal! Do you suppose that Arlington, a fine, handsome young man, mingling in certain cliques, where certain attachments are, if not openly acknowledged, at least tacitly tolerated, has been living like a saint?"

"Really, Lord Vavasour, it is quite dreadful to hear you talk, — you, a husband and a father, making light of conduct the most reprehensible, the most wicked!"

"Well, well, after all, my dear, recollect that when you married me, I did not pass for a saint; nay, I verily believe I was considered one of the greatest sinners about town; and yet, I do not think I have made a bad husband."

This appeal touched a tender chord in the feelings of Lady Vavasour; and candour and affection both led her to admit, that, if her husband's theory sometimes tempted him to "make the worse appear the better cause," in practice, his conduct had been irreproachable; and this opportune recollection somewhat softened the severity of her strictures on the supposed guilt of Arlington.

Her more pacific tone, produced a correspondent effect on her lord; and he begged her not

to hint a word of what she had heard to Emily, while he promised to keep an observant eye on the conduct of their intended son-in-law.

"If it be true," said Lord Vavasour, "that Arlington has had an attachment to Lady Walmer, and, as is supposed, that it was reciprocal, there is no reason to imagine that, if it still continued, he would seek the hand of our daughter: and to make him now suffer for passed folly, would be unreasonable."

"There now, my dear, interrupted Lady Vavasour, "you do so provoke me by calling guilt, — serious, dreadful guilt, — folly. Have we not cause to tremble for the future happiness of our good, our innocent child, if we commit it to the keeping of a man who has indulged a passion for a married woman?"

"But this attachment may, and, we ought to hope, has been unattended with guilt," replied Lord Vavasour; "Arlington may have seen his danger in time, and avoided it; look

at the fair side of the picture, my dear, and let us believe that, in half the liaisons to which guilt is attributed, *the appearance* only exists."

Lord Vavasour tried to think as he spoke; but now, that all Mrs. Preston's tales were supported by the evidence of his wife's personal observation, and, indeed, by his own late-awakened consciousness of something strange and embarrassed in Arlington, as well as something indescribable in Lady Walmer's manner, he felt a suspicion that all was not right, though he would not admit his apprehension to his wife. He determined to observe them narrowly, and, perhaps for the first time of his life, fell asleep with the painful sensation of mistrusting a person he had been accustomed to esteem.

It rarely happens that even the most innocent can escape, when their actions are viewed through the medium of suspicion, which, like

jealousy, gives its own colouring to every object on which it reflects. In such cases, persons imagine they are only examining, when they have already condemned, because they go to the trial with excited susceptibilities, predisposed to find the suspected, guilty.

CHAPTER XII.

"C'est le propre des passions d'altérer le jugement, et de nous faire perdre ce sens droit qui nous montre les choses sous leur véritable aspect."

When the party met at breakfast, the next morning, the marked coldness of Lady Vavasour's manner towards Lady Walmer, and the embarrassment that coldness evidently occasioned to her who was the object of it, enlisted all the sympathy of Arlington on her side. She was now an object of pity to him—a dangerous position for the pityer, at least, if not for the pitied,—and conscious that she had placed herself in her present humiliating situation, through a

misplaced affection for him, (though he would willingly, gladly have dispensed with it,) still he felt himself bound to bestow more attention on her, now that there was a visible diminution of it on the part of her host and hostess.

The constrained politeness of the Vavasours, so different to the empressment which she had been accustomed to see evinced towards her, piqued the pride of Lady Walmer, and a desire of avenging herself on them, was soon added to her selfish wish of winning Arlington again into her chains:—to such lengths can vanity and egoism push their heartless votaries, who begin by being only weak, and end by being wicked.

Emily entered the breakfast-room, with renewed hopes of happiness, and restored confidence in her lover. A refreshing slumber had brought back the roses to her cheek, and animation to her countenance; a bright sunshine illuminated every object that met her gaze, and its exhilirating effects made themselves even more

evident on her youthful frame and elastic spirits, than on the trees and herbage on which it shone, imparting to each a thousand brilliant hues.

She smiled at her foreboding fears of the evening before, and was angry with herself for having yielded to them for a moment; it was an injustice to Arlington for which she longed to make him amends; and, after all, what had she observed, at which she had a right to be dissatisfied? Nothing. Lady Walmer, it is true, kept her eyes fixed on Arlington all the evening; and her manner of appearing to address her song exclusively to him, was peculiar, and had wounded her; but it might be only her general manner; she was perhaps one of those coquettish persons of whom Emily had read, more than observed, and Arlington being the only young man present, she had played off her propensities on him. It could be nothing else! and again she blamed herself for having been made unhappy.

All this passed through the pure mind of the lovely, and amiable girl, as she performed the duties of her simple, but elegant toilette de matin, to which she gave even more than her accustomed attention; determined, with a woman's latent feeling of vanity, to wear her best looks, as an amende to her lover, for having worn her worst, the previous evening.

The pale cheek, and languid eye of Emily, had often been present to Arlington's imagination during the night: he loved her more fondly than ever, for those proofs of her affection, and reproached himself bitterly for having called them forth. He entered the breakfast-room, determined to resume all his wonted attention to her, and little disposed to bestow any portion of it on Lady Walmer; when the ill-judged display of coldness, almost amounting to incivility, of the host and hostess to her, and their constrained manner towards himself, completely changed the current of his

feelings, and piqued him into a display of attention towards her, that would, otherwise, have never been paid.

Lord Walmer, who appeared totally unconscious of all that was passing around him, having happened to look at his wife, observed aloud, that he had never seen her look so pale; and with his habitual good-nature, hoped she was not ill. This drew from the lady an avowal, that she had not closed her eyes during the night; and a stolen glance at Arlington,—which was duly noted by Lord and Lady Vavasour,—implied that he was the cause; which so vexed them, that they could not force themselves to utter the usual regrets, or expressions of interest, always used on such occasions;—an omission, which excited the displeasure of Arlington, and induced him to redouble his civilities.

Lady Walmer having remarked the night before, how much the paleness, and air abattu,

of Emily, had increased the interest of her lover for her, determined to emulate these indications of sensibility. With her it was easily done; she had only to leave off the rouge, which daily lent her cheek its bright tint, and assume a languid air, and the metamorphosis was complete. It might have been lost on Arlington, who was determined not to look at her, had not the observation of Lord Walmer drawn his eyes to her face, and her unusual pallor struck him with pity, little judging its cause.

It was at this moment that Emily entered, glowing with health and beauty, animation sparkling in her liquid eye, and playing on her rich lips, which parted with smiles as she replied to the various inquiries of interest and affection, that met her at every side.

"I am quite well, thank you; never slept better; and awoke as if I had never had a headache:" were the answers to all; and a sweet

smile, and cordial shake-hands to Arlington, set his mind at rest as to *his* having wounded her peace the night before.

Perhaps there was a lingering feeling of vanity in the sentiment of disappointment, with which he heard her avowal of perfect health, and marked her appearance of gaiety. Then, after all, she did not love him as well as he had fancied, and the indisposition of the night before had nothing to do with him. No! it was the unfortunate Lady Walmer, who was to be pitied, and who was placed in her present painful humiliating position, through her uncontrolable affection for him.

All these thoughts rushed through his mind, and the result was, that he shewed much more attention to the unworthy coquette, than his engagement with Emily ought to have allowed; and the dear innocent girl, determining to atone for her suspicions of the previous evening, made an effort to maintain her

cheerfulness during the repast, and succeeded so well, that she never appeared more beautiful, or more brilliant in the eyes of all around her.

Lord Walmer announced his intention, after breakfast, of leaving Vavasour Castle the next morning, and the faint opposition to the measure expressed by its owners, struck even him, as being most inhospitable, though his obtuseness generally prevented his remarking many things, which must have been observed by others.

Much as Arlington wished them gone,—and he sincerely desired it,—yet he was shocked at what he considered the rudeness of Lord and Lady Vavasour, and he felt increased pity for Lady Walmer, at the gaucherie of her position.

A drive to view some picturesque site in the neighbourhood, kept the ladies together, under mutual constraint, until the first dinner-bell sent them to their dressing-rooms; and a

dull dinner, unenlivened by a single effort at gaiety, except on the part of Emily, who vainly tried to dissipate the general gloom, was followed by as dull an evening; for each, and all, felt under a restraint.

Lady Vavasour sent Emily to her dressing-room for her salts, to relieve a head-ache; and Arlington eagerly seized an opportunity of quitting the room a moment after. He met Lady Emily descending the stairs, and the mutual restraint both had undergone for the last two days, made them feel this meeting with double pleasure. Arlington drew her arm within his, and pressing her hand to his heart and then to his lips, repeated those vows of affection, which were so gratifying to the artless girl.

"Dear, dear Emily," said he, "how long have the two last days appeared to me, and how blissful is it to meet you again alone, even for a few minutes."

"I too, have thought them long," replied Emily, as, with a look beaming with confidence and affection, she fixed her mild eyes on his.

"Bless you, dearest! for the avowal," said Arlington: and again and again the little white hand that rested within his, was pressed to his lips. "Tell me, my own Emily, that you, like me, look forward with delight to the happy future, when united in the indissoluble bonds of marriage, we shall never be separated?"

"Yes, dearest Charles," said the blushing girl, "all my wishes,—all my hopes,—are centered in the happy prospect of being your wife: and except that I must leave my father and mother,"—and here a tear trembled in her eye,—"I should be too happy. But let us go to my mother; see,"—holding up the flacon of salts,—"how you've made me forget her already."

Again was her hand pressed to the lips of her lover, as she tried gently to disengage it;

and never did he feel so passionately and devotedly attached to her as at this moment, when hope whispered, "In a few days, this charming and pure-minded creature will be your wife."

When they entered the salon, the eyes of Lady Walmer flashed with rage and jealousy, as she marked the expression of happiness in their countenances; but Arlington was too joyous to think of her, or if he did for a moment, it was only to rejoice that the next day she would be no longer present to interrupt his felicity. He felt that never had Emily been so dear to him as at this moment, and his indifference to Lady Walmer had grown almost into repugnance.

At length the soirée which had dragged so heavily along, drew to its close; and as the ladies rose to leave the drawing-room, Lady Walmer found means to slip a note into the hand of Arlington.

On going to his room, he read the following lines, almost illegible, from the trembling of the hand that traced them.

"It is necessary, for my peace of mind, that we meet once more, where I can speak to you without witnesses or interruption;—no place offers itself, but my dressing-room; so come there, as soon as you have perused this."

The first impulse of Arlington was to decline the interview; but then, came the reflection, that she would sit up expecting him; and this avoidance of her would appear ungrateful, and unkind.

He reflected a quarter of an hour, his mind in a chaos of agitation, when at length he came to the resolution of writing to her, and leaving the letter at her door.

He wrote a hurried and almost incoherent letter, in which he avowed his love for, and

engagement to Emily, and the impossibility, under such circumstances, of having a clandestine interview with her who demanded it.

Feeling the necessity of candour, and actuated by the hope that his confession might excite the better feelings of Lady Walmer, he opened his whole soul to her, and his passion for her rival was exposed with all the fervour which his pen could give it. He prayed her to pardon his passed folly and presumption, in having sought to win her pity to a passion unworthy of her purity; and bidding her farewell, assured her of his eternal friendship, and respect.

He took this letter to the door of her dressing-room, tapped gently at it, intending when it was opened, to place the letter in her hand, and retire; but at the moment she appeared at the door, footsteps were heard advancing, light flashed along the corridor, and Lady Walmer, grasping his arm, pulled, rather

than led him into the room, and, with trembling hands again fastened it.

She had scarcely done so, when the voice of her husband, demanding entrance threw both Arlington and herself into a state of agitation difficult to be imagined. To push Arlington behind the window-curtain, and open the door, was the work of a moment, and her despair may be conceived, when she saw Lord Walmer, en robe de chambre, place himself at full length on a sofa, a position indicating his intention of not soon quitting it.

"Well, my love, have you observed how very coldly, not to say uncivilly, the Vavasours have behaved to us?" asked Lord Walmer.

"I have not paid much attention to them," replied the agitated wife, (whose heart throbbed violently, while she endeavoured to conceal her emotion,) "they are very dull people, and shocking bores."

"You must except Lady Emily," said Lord

Walmer, "for she is as agreeable as she is beautiful. Arlington is a happy dog, to get such a wife; every man in London will envy him!"

Lady Walmer felt enraged that Arlington should hear such warm commendations of Emily, and jealousy and envy sent their pangs to her heart.

"How fondly attached she seems to him," resumed Lord Walmer; "I have caught those beautiful eyes of her's, fixed on his face fifty times since we have been here, with an expression of such deep tenderness as I never saw before, and then withdrawn, as if fearful of being observed."

Lady Walmer writhed at every word her husband uttered.

At this moment, her lap-dog, Medore, who had been asleep, awoke by the voice of Lord Walmer, ran from under the sofa, and begun barking violently.

"Hang that dog! what the deuce is the matter with him?" said Lord Walmer.

"Nothing, nothing!" replied Lady Walmer, terrified lest the dog should approach the window; "Medore, Medore, be quiet! but in vain were her calls to the dog; he barked still louder than ever, and ran round the room, continually approaching the window. Her heart almost died within her when Lord Walmer rose, and walked towards it, exclaiming, "Don't be frightened—there is a cat or something here."

"No, no!" said Lady Walmer, seizing his arm, "there is nothing there; let us drive Medore out of the room;" and she attempted to catch the dog.

"Depend on it," said Lord Walmer, "there is a cat behind that curtain, for you see Medore always runs towards it—nay, I'm sure I saw it move. Do not be alarmed," observing her agitation, "I shall soon see what is there."

"Oh, do not!" said Lady Walmer, gasping with terror, and holding him by the arm.

"Why, my love, this is quite childish; I never saw you nervous before," said the husband; but at this moment, the dog ran behind the curtain, barking more violently than ever, and Lord Walmer, breaking from the grasp of his wife, pursued Medore, and lifting the curtain—beheld Arlington!

To convey a description of the expression of the countenance of each of the trio, would be impossible. Arlington attempted to speak, but Lord Walmer interrupted him, by saying,

"All explanation, my lord, is now unnecessary. Your concealment behind that curtain, and this lady's anxiety to prevent my approaching it, explains all. For you, madam," casting a glance of anger and contempt at his wife, "you see me now for the last time; I prohibit you from ever again addressing the husband you have betrayed and dishonoured; and the

laws of my country shall soon dissolve the ties that unite us."

He approached the door to leave the room, but Lady Walmer clung to his arm.

"Oh, leave me not! do not abandon me, I implore, I intreat of you!" cried she in agony: "I am innocent, indeed I am innocent!"

"Dare you make such an assertion, after the discovery I have made?" said the enraged husband. "No, madam, I am no longer your dupe;" and so saying, he scornfully freed himself from her grasp, and left the chamber.

Lady Walmer sank fainting on the sofa; and Arlington, nearly as overcome as herself, was almost incapable of administering her any assistance. He felt as if in a fearful dream; the occurrences of the last few minutes seemed to comprise hours of torture; and as his eyes fell on the insensible form of her who had caused all this mischief, he turned from her with a sensation almost approaching to loathing. The

future, — the gloomy, interminable future, — seemed unfolded to his prophetic gaze, and Emily, his promised bride, was never loved with such intense passion, as at this moment, when he felt there was an impassable barrier placed between them for ever.

On coming to her senses, Lady Walmer shuddered when her eyes fell on Arlington. There was an expression of despair on his brow that alarmed her, and she hardly dared to meet his glance.

"Is there no hope?" she at length exclaimed; "Can you not go to him, and convince him of my innocence?" but the last word expired on her tongue, as conscience whispered her how faulty, how odious, had been her conduct.

"But how account for my being concealed in this room?" asked Arlington.

"True, true," uttered she in agony, "all, all is lost, and I am wretched for life!"

Had she said *we*, instead of *I*, he might have pitied her; but, seeing her wholly engrossed by self, he remembered with bitterness, that *she* was the cause of all this wretchedness. An intuitive feeling of what was passing in his mind, rushed through her's, and, turning from him, she exclaimed, "Leave me, leave me! would that we had never met!"

Arlington seized a pen, and unable to trust himself to speak, he wrote a few hasty lines, saying, that though the unwilling cause of her misfortune, he was willing to lighten or share it, and should wait in his own room her further commands. He placed this note on the table before her, and silently withdrew;—being himself, and leaving her, a prey to the most bitter regret for the passed, and the most fearful forebodings for the future.

CHAPTER XIII.

Quand on a pu dire: J'ai un ami! qu'il doit être affreux ce mot: Je l'ai eu!———

It is long since we left Desbrow, pursuing his melancholy journey to Ayrshire Abbey, and not even the anticipation of seeing his beloved Cecile could cheer his depressed spirits.

He arrived late in the evening, and as he looked from his carriage, while it wound through the park, the leafless trees, through which the wind mournfully whistled, as in fitful gusts it shook their branches, or scattered the dead leaves in the air, seemed in harmony with his sombre feelings.

How lately had he passed through this park, when gay in verdure, the trees wore their leafy honours, and innumerable feathered choristers sent forth their glad notes. The amiable and excellent mistress of those domains was then in high health, glad and gladdening all around her: but where was she now? in the grave - over which the night-winds sighed her requiem. The lamps threw a lugubrious gleam over the train of servants in deep mourning, that lined the hall: and their serious faces shewed that their mourning was not merely external. He was told that the Marquis and Mademoiselle de Bethune were in their dressing-rooms, and he hastened to change his dress.

The duties of the toilette performed, he entered the library, and found himself in the presence of Cecile, Lord Ayrshire, and a stranger, whom he concluded to be the father of his betrothed.

The meeting was almost a silent one, for

all were unable to express the feelings with which their hearts were overflowing. The thoughts of each were with the dead; and they dared not trust themselves to express them but by affectionate pressures of the hand.

The marquis, after a few minutes had restored him to composure, presented Desbrow to the Comte de Bethune, who advanced ceremoniously, and, a la francaise, offered to embrace him; while Desbrow, unaccustomed to this Gallic habit, drew back astonished, and held out his hand, a l'Anglaise, which the comte coldly touched, evidently piqued at Desbrow's manque d'usage, as he considered it.

Cecile had never appeared so beautiful to the eyes of her lover, as at this moment; her deep mourning, contrasted with the exquisite fairness of her complexion, and the pensive expression of her lovely face, had something so calm, yet touching, in it, that during several minutes he

could not take his eyes from her. Grief seemed to have lent her beauty a purer, higher character; and resignation rendered that grief almost holy.

When Desbrow did look from her, he was struck by the change in the appearance of Lord Ayrshire; he seemed as if ten years had been added to his age; his cheeks were hollow, his eyes dim and swollen, his shoulders bowed, and his whole person was emaciated.

His next glance fell on the Comte de Bethune, who might have served as the type of a French nobleman of l'ancien régime;—tall and thin, with great personal beauty, yet with a cold and repulsive countenance, and a manner, from which dignity and studied politeness seemed to have excluded cordiality.

Dinner was announced, while yet Desbrow was making his mental observations on the comte; and Lord Ayrshire, placing the hand of Cecile within that of her lover, led the way to the salle-à-manger.

The now vacant place, which Desbrow had seen so often filled by Lady Ayrshire, renewed the feelings of all three;—there was the same room, the same plate,—servants, all was as in passed times, but *her* presence was wanted, who had been wont to spread happiness around.

The repast would have been a silent one, but for the comte, who expatiated with a culinary erudition, that would not have shamed Grimod de la Reynière himself, on the different entrées and entrêmets, the fumets of the gibier, and the comparative merits of the grouse, ptarmegan and black cock, with the coq de bruyere and gelinotte, always according the preference to the gibier of his own favoured country, which none of the present party were disposed to dispute.

The wines of France then engrossed his conversation, and he dwelt with pleasure on their acknowledged superiority, naming those which ought only to be *tasted*, in order to prepare the

palate for some other still more rare vintage, and those which might be *drunk*.

Though his incessant bavardage was a relief to the circle, by preventing the necessity of their conversing, an effort to which each of the trio felt themselves to be incapable, yet it left the impression on their minds, of how obtuse must be *his* feelings who could thus shew so little respect to theirs; and Desbrow saw the blush of shame mantle the pale cheek of Cecile, as her timid eye turned to observe the impression made on him by her father.

There is, perhaps, no situation more painfully embarrassing, than that in which persons are placed, when witnessing the display of the obtuseness or want of tact of near relations, before those on whom they are anxious that a favourable impression should be made.

Cecile felt this keenly, and the more so, as her deep regret for Lady Ayrshire rendered her almost indignant that her loss should be so

little lamented by one who owed so much to her kindness, and that one, her parent.

Lord Ayrshire and Desbrow sympathized too truly in her feelings, not to be aware of what was passing in her mind; and both felt as if drawn still more fondly towards her, by observing all she suffered by her father's want of feeling.

When Cecile had withdrawn, and left the gentlemen to themselves, the comte made what he considered a complimentary speech to Desbrow, on his good fortune, on having secured the hand of a young lady, of whom, although his daughter, he must be permitted to say, any man might be proud.

Desbrow warmly assented, but when the comte added, the advantages to be derived by Desbrow's entering into one of the most noble and distinguished families in France, his assent was merely given by a bow; which the comte evidently considered a very insufficient mark

of acknowledgment, as he quickly shewed, by saying, in a tone of pique, that for his part, had he only consulted his own feelings, he must, notwithstanding his high opinion of Monsieur Desbrow, have preferred seeing his daughter allied to some one of the noble families of his own country, all of whom would doubtless be anxious to lay their honours at her feet, than to have her married in England.

This speech merited no flattering reply, and received none, for Desbrow felt that the only objection which ever presented itself to his mind, when he first loved Cecile, was the circumstance of her being of another country; an objection that he quickly forgot, when her qualities came to be known, and which he had never since remembered, until it was now so disagreeably obtruded on his attention.

Lord Ayrshire saw the danger of allowing the comte to continue the conversation much longer in the same strain; and endeavoured to

turn it, by expressing his regret that he could not prevail on Comte de Bethune to pass a few months with him, that the marriage of Cecile, might take place in Scotland, adding, "I shall be so solitary, that it would be a charity to stay with me."

"It is quite impossible, my dear lord," replied the comte; "les convenances,"—that first essential in the code of a Frenchman, and before which all others give way,—"preclude my daughter remaining under your roof, now that her cousin is no more; and demand that Mademoiselle de Bethune should be presented at the Court of France, before she changes her name. She has many relations, all anxious to renew their claims on her attention; and the period allotted for her mourning cannot be better employed, than in cultivating an acquaintance with her country, and distinguished connexions.—Monsieur Desbrow,"—bowing to him,—"will, I

doubt not, see the propriety of this measure; and also, that of having the nuptial knot tied in France; as the marriage of a Bethune ought not to be celebrated elsewhere than in the capital where her ancestors have filled such distinguished situations."

The pompous airs of the comte seemed equally repugnant to Lord Ayrshire, as to Desbrow; both felt his presence a restraint on them, and were glad when coffee was announced, to interrupt his harangues.

During the evening, the comte seemed determined on saying, or doing, whatever was most likely to wound the peculiarities of Desbrow: on each of these occasions, Cecile would cast a beseeching look at her lover, who instantly checked the reply that rose to his lips, and her eyes thanked him for the forbearance, more eloquently than words could have done.

Never had Desbrow passed the hours so heavily at Ayrshire Abbey, as on this evening. To revert uninterruptedly to passed happiness, would have been luxury to the state of restraint in which he felt himself placed: but at length, Lord Ayrshire, taking compassion on his visible uneasiness, proposed a party of picquet to the comte, which left the lovers at liberty to converse together for an hour, at the other side of the room.

Their first words were spent in deploring the loss of Lady Ayrshire. Before them was her chair, placed near the small table appropriated to her use, and which still wore its wonted appearance. The vase, filled with flowers; her books, paper-knife, smelling-bottle, and pencil, were all as when she had used them; as her Lord had requested that they might not be touched. Her portrait, a striking likeness, hung nearly over the chair, she used to occupy, and seemed to wear her

own benignant smile, as if regarding the loved objects around her.

Cecile pointed out all this to Desbrow, knowing that he could sympathize in the feelings they awakened; and still further excited his regret and reverence for the dead, by telling him how kindly and affectionately he had been named by her, in her last hours. "I know that you will bear with my father's peculiarities," said Cecile; "he has never lived much in England, and has certain prejudices, that we must rather sooth than irritate. I am too English, not to feel this, and not to be aware how it must strike you, but I hope, I trust, you will bear with him."

What would not Desbrow have borne with, to be so intreated! and he felt at the moment, the promise he repeated, that she might count on his submitting to anything, or everything, rather than give her a moment's pain.

Both felt happier after this conversation.

and to prove its beneficial results on him, Desbrow became more attentive to the Comte de Bethune, and did all in his power to cultivate his good opinion.

The second day, he ventured to express his regret, that the brother of Cecile had not accompanied his father to England; and repeated his desire to become known to him.

"These are not times," replied the comte, "mon cher Monsieur Desbrow, for a military man to quit his post; my son will be always found near his sovereign, who has, alas! but too much occasion for devoted adherents, to stem the tide of popular disaffection, which threatens to overset his throne, and destroy his kingdom."

"We must hope," said Lord Ayrshire, "that France is not in so dangerous a state as you think."

"Would that it were not!" said the comte;

"but daily experience proves, that unless Charles X. has firmness enough to adopt the measures recommended to him by those who have the sense to oppose themselves to the overwhelming flow of anarchy, which, under the name of liberal principles, aims at oversetting the throne, and the altar, all must be lost. The press, must be put down, Monsieur Desbrow, or it will put us down; but, luckily, the king has now those around him, who are devoted to l'ancien régime, and determined to oppose the encroachments of the liberals."

Lord Ayrshire saw by the heightened colour, and flashing eye of Desbrow, that he was on the point of giving vent to the feelings which the speech of Comte de Bethune excited; and giving him an expressive look, to deprecate any remonstrance, he hastened to change the subject.

When Desbrow found himself alone with

Lord Ayrshire, the latter spoke to him as follows:

"I am aware, my dear friend, that such is your affection for Cecile, that your happiness depends on a union with her; if, therefore, you wish that nothing should occur to oppose this union, beware of offending the political, religious, or national prejudices of her father. With many good qualities, he is full of prejudices, and untolerating and unforgiving to those who offer any opposition to them; bear with him, for argument is useless,—nay worse,—would only lead to disagreement, in which your happiness, and that of Cecile, may be compromised. I wish your marriage could have taken place in England: and so wished my dear lost wife; for, knowing the character of Comte de Bethune, as I do, I like not the idea of our dear Cecile being confided to one, who, though her father, is so uncongenial to her in every respect;

but it cannot be helped, and we must only hope the best, and avoid every possible occasion of offending the too-susceptible comte. Cecile is ill at ease with him; he is jealous of her affection for me, and her attachment to England, and all that is English: this feeling breaks forth continually, but she bears it admirably; we, my dear friend, must take care not to add to her sufferings, by exciting his displeasure, which is but too easily aroused on the most trivial subjects, where his prejudices are touched, and they are continually on the qui vive."

Desbrow felt the justice of Lord Ayrshire's counsel, and the friendship which dictated it, and he promised to follow it strictly: a resolution which it required no little self-command to fulfil, as scarcely an hour passed, in which Comte de Bethune did not try his forbearance to its utmost extent, by the display of illiberality, and prejudices, more suited

to the feudal system of l'ancien régime, of which he was always lamenting the suppression, than the enlightened views of the nineteenth century.

But well was Desbrow repaid for his forbearance towards the father, by the affection and confidence of the charming daughter, who became every hour more dear to him, as her inestimable qualities became more known. Her touching attention to Lord Ayrshire, endeavouring to anticipate his wishes, and to supply the place of *her* he had lost; her sweetness, and patience, under all the wayward humours of her father, and the tact with which she soothed them; but, above all, her frank, yet modest manner of marking her affection for himself, enchanted her lover, and there was no personal sacrifice that he would not willingly have made, to insure her happiness.

Desbrow wished much, that the Comte de

Bethune should see one, or both of his estates, and consulted Cecile, on the propriety of engaging him to visit them; but the blush that rose to her cheek as she hesitated to reply, told him *she* wished it not.

After a moment's silence, she looked affectionately in his face, and thus addressed him: "It is painful to expose, even to the one most dear to us, the foibles of a parent; but yet, you are so good, and so forbearing, that I may remind you, that my poor father lost an immense fortune by the Revolution; his chateaux, estates,—all were confiscated: and when he sees, or is engaged to see, the mansions and domains of others, he reverts with bitterness to those he once possessed, and becomes soured by the reminiscence. He is proud, very proud, which we must forgive, when we reflect that it is his present comparative poverty that makes him so; for all who knew him in his splendour, de-

clare that he was then, free from this weakness. He suffers acutely at the idea of my going to you a portionless bride; and the sight of your residences might only awaken painful feelings."

It was thus, that Cecile each day softened down the asperities of her father and lover, and rendered herself each hour dearer to the latter. Upon her parent too, she must have produced a similar effect, but that all his affection, and what was still much stronger, his pride, were centered in his only son, the supporter of his ancient name, and the inheritor of the titles, and the dilapidated part of the fortune of his ancestors, which the indemnity had restored to him. This son was his idol, the constant subject of his conversation, and referred to on all occasions, as one, from whose opinion there was no appeal.

There is something in the natures of even the best persons, which induces them to hear

with distaste, if not doubt, the continued praises of some one unknown; and when the Athenians banished Aristides, because they were tired of hearing him called "The Just!" they were true to that alloy in human nature, which turns with disgust from praise bestowed on another, however well merited. A woman, held up as a beauty before seen, is sure to appear less handsome (however beautiful she may be) to those who have been hearing exaggerated descriptions of her; and virtue and talents, extravagantly praised, are apt to engender doubt of their existence, or disinclination towards their possessor.

Lord Ayrshire, with all his good-nature, became tired of hearing the excellence, mental and personal, of Auguste de Bethune, who, if his partial father was to be believed, was a second Admirable Crichton; and Desbrow too, found himself, malgré lui, rather unfavourably disposed towards this "faultless monster," who

was represented as handsomest, "wisest, virtuest, best."

Cecile alone felt disposed to render her brother justice. She remembered with fondness, the fine, impetuous, high-spirited boy, with curly locks, brilliant eyes, and inexhaustible gaiety, who was always either quarrelling with, or kissing her, when they met as children; and though a long period had now elapsed since she had seen him, she felt all a sister's partiality, though she had sufficient tact and perception, to wish that her father praised him less frequently and extravagantly.

It was difficult for Desbrow to command his temper, when he heard the Comte de Bethune find fault with Cecile's deportment and mode of walking, observing, "C'est bien Anglais, je vous demande pardone, messieurs, mais nous changerons tout cela à Paris." Her toilette and tournure were also censured by her fastidious father, who repeated his longing

desire that she might profit from the taste and address of the Parisian modistes.

Now, Desbrow was justly proud of the tournure of Cecile, which was peculiarly elegant and dignified; and her toilette, which was always simple, yet well chosen and becoming, fully met his approbation; so that he could with difficulty restrain his impatience, when he heard the tasteless comments of the Comte. But an appealing look of intreaty from her, silenced the defence that was rising to his lips, and which could not have failed to offend her father; and he contented himself with feeling an increased admiration for all that the Comte disapproved.

The presence of Comte de Bethune, imposed a restraint on the three persons with whom he was thrown, that was every hour more painfully felt. Lord Ayrshire kindly endeavoured to occupy him for an hour or two in the evening, at picquet or chess, during which time Des-

brow, seated by Cecile, was consoled for the constraint he had endured during the long day; but so quickly flew the moments near her, that the interminable hours passed in the society of her father, seemed of endless duration by the force of contrast,—at least, so thought her lover!

At last, the day arrived, fixed for the departure of father and daughter; and Lord Ayrshire and Desbrow, anxious to be with Cecile as long as possible, determined to accompany them to Dover. Gladly would they have gone to France, to save her from being wholly left to the uncongenial society of her parent, but that Lord Ayrshire felt that, in his affliction, the gaieties of the French capital would be as unbearable as inconvenantes; and he knew sufficient of Comte de Bethune, to be aware that the period of Cecile's residence there, would be devoted to introducing her to all his connexions and acquaintances.

Desbrow, feeling the incompatibility of his character, with that of his future beau pere, thought it best to avoid personal intercourse with him, until the period fixed for his marriage had arrived; and much as he regretted tearing himself away from Cecile, he submitted to it, looking forward to the end of June, the time named for his nuptials, with all the impatience of an ardent lover.

CHAPTER XIV.

"On eût dit un ange aux ailes coupées, tombé, du haut des cieux sur la terre, et passé de la joie aux larmes, sans transitions, sans faute, et sans chute."

THE morning that was to see Cecile leave the mansion, which had been from childhood her happy home, broke heavily on her weary eyelids, after a sleepless night, passed in painful retrospection and gloomy anticipation.

How many thoughts of the past, the happy past, rose up before her, in which her dear departed friend, her more than mother, was mingled.

By the little bed, on which she now re-

clined, had that dear friend sat, hour after hour, supporting her languid head, and pressing her throbbing temples, when two years before a fever had attacked her.

The noiseless step, the gentle voice, the soothing words of affection, which, during the long hours of illness, she had so often gratefully remarked, all now returned to memory, and tears of sorrow streamed from her eyes at the recollection.

About to leave, perhaps for ever, the scene where her happy childhood had been passed, she felt as if again losing Lady Ayrshire, who had been the principal source of all that happiness.

While she remained at Ayrshire Abbey, surrounded by so many objects, that every moment reminded her of that dear friend, she seemed not totally lost to her; but now she should be withdrawn from even this melancholy consolation; and a miniature, and lock of hair,

were all that remained to her, of one, whose unabated affection she never could forget, and whose memory she reverenced.

She left her pillow at an early hour; and, having made all the preparations for her journey, she stole silently from her chamber, and sought the church, half-a-mile distant from the house, where reposed the mortal remains of one who had so well supplied the place of mother to her.

It was one of those gloomy mornings in winter, when lowering clouds and a drizzling rain add dreariness to every object around. The leafless trees, stunted grass, and withered shrubs, all emblems of mortality, were so in harmony with the melancholy of her feelings, that as she entered the church, and sank by the side of the tomb which covered the mouldering frame of the loved dead, her tears and sobs could no longer be suppressed, and she yielded to her emotions, until their intensity subdued their

violence, and left only that calm feeling of resignation which religion alone can give, and which is the only balm for sorrow.

The parting between Cecile and the old servants, who had loved her from her infancy, was highly touching: and Desbrow, as he witnessed, saw in it an earnest of the happiness, she, who was so beloved by the dependants of another, would bring to his home.

Their journey was made in the travelling coach of Lord Ayrshire, which held the four, and the carriages of Comte de Bethune and Desbrow followed. By this arrangement, they enjoyed the presence of Cecile, though the sense of that enjoyment was often interrupted by the querulous observations of the comte, who found out, with his accustomed national partiality, that the paved roads of la belle France were infinitely superior to the macadamized one, over which they were gliding with an almost unconscious motion; and that the views were

little, mean, and bounded, looking like those in a gentleman's park, instead of glancing over a vast prospect of open country, as in France.

Nay, even the English carriages came in for their share of his censures; they were so much too easy, the double springs prevented that motion, so *agreeable* and *healthy* in French carriages, which rendered a drive in one of them as conducive to the acceleration of the circulation of the blood as horse exercise. But in all English vehicles, one felt as if seated in an easy chair, no exercise, no movement, and consequently no appetite; though, to judge from the specimen he gave of his at every inn at which the party stopped, one might have arrived at a different conclusion.

The trottoirs in the streets were found to be most inconvenient, as they took up so much space, for the accommodation of pedestrians, generally composed of the canaille, which might

have been better employed, in affording place for the equipages of the aristocracy.

The dinners at the inns were pronounced to be detestable; the cooking, execrable: and the want of les petits vins de France, a serious grievance, as the vin de Bordeaux was too strong, and the other wines, trop capiteux.

Cecile seemed to suffer so much from the fastidiousness and prejudices of her father, that Lord Ayrshire and Desbrow endeavoured to avert even the appearance of dissent from his opinions; and by this forbearance, the journey passed off without any disagreeable discussion, though three of the travellers felt, that to their forbearance alone was this harmony to be attributed; the fourth was too much occupied with self, to think of aught else.

A detour was made, to avoid passing through London, and our party, on arriving at Dover, learned that a packet was to sail for Calais next morning.

They passed a silent and sorrowful evening at the inn, all, except the comte, painfully occupied with the thoughts of their approaching separation, which weighed heavily on their minds.

Cecile found a few moments to converse alone with Desbrow, and employed them chiefly to intreat that he would devote as much of his time as possible to her dear Lord Ayrshire.

"I shall no longer be near to console him," said the affectionate girl; and he will need the presence of some one who was acquainted with *her* he laments, to whom he can talk of her, and know that his praises and regrets are felt and reciprocated."

Desbrow promised to devote his whole time and attention to him; and this promise was a new link in the chain of affection, which united him to Cecile.

Before parting for the night, Cecile told Desbrow, that she could give him tidings of his friend Arlington, as she had found a letter from

her dear Lady Emily Vavasour, at Dover, which had been forwarded from Ayrshire Abbey, announcing her approaching marriage with Lord Arlington, and deeply regretting that the recent affliction of Lord Ayrshire precluded her from intreating Cecile's presence at her nuptials.

"They must be married ere this," said she, "as the letter is of long date." If you knew dear Emily, as I do," continued Cecile, "how you would rejoice at the happiness of your friend! She is all goodness, and beautiful as good;—I love her as though she were my sister."

Desbrow felt highly gratified at this intelligence, for the sincerity of his attachment made him rejoice that his friend had chosen so wisely; and he rejoiced the more, that their wives, by a happy chance, should be such dear friends, as to ensure their being able to keep up the same cordial intercourse that had ever subsisted between them.

He communicated this sentiment to Cecile,

who partook of it, and they dwelt, with pleasure, on the thought of their future intimacy.

At an early hour next morning, after a hurried attempt at breakfast, the party left the Ship Inn, to embark on board the steamboat.

Desbrow gave his arm to Cecile, and again and again repeated the vows of unalterable love, while he led her towards the vessel.

Partings are always painful to those who are attached; but when the sea is about to divide us from those we love, the bitterness is increased, as the distance seems extended, and a vague dread of every risk, to which that fickle element exposes its voyagers, steals over even the manly heart,—a dread still more felt by the susceptible and ductile—one of woman.

Lord Ayrshire and Desbrow entered the ship, to remain with Cecile to the last moment: and both were supporting her while they endeavoured to speak that comfort to her, which

they were themselves far from feeling; when, at the same moment, all three recognised Lord Arlington walking towards them, sustaining on his arm a lady enveloped in a shawl and mantle, whose face was concealed by a deep bonnet and black lace veil which covered it.

"There is Lord Arlington, and that must be my dear Emily," exclaimed Cecile; "oh! how fortunate to meet her, and by accident, when I have such need of her consolation!"

So saying, she flew, rather than ran, towards the supposed Emily, and had clasped her in her arms ere she discovered that the lady was, Lady Walmer; with whom she was but slightly acquainted.

She explained her mistake, and was rather surprised at observing that lady shrink back, turning alternately pale and red, and nearly overcome by agitation, requesting Arlington to lead her to the cabin. While this scene was passing between the ladies, Desbrow had ap-

proached Arlington, with extended hand and cordial greeting; but, to his amazement, he drew back, evidently distressed and embarrassed, waving his hand to Desbrow, as if to intreat him to retire; while he hurried Lady Walmer into the cabin.

All this scene was inexplicable to Desbrow; and, to Cecile's repeated expressions of wonder as to its meaning he could make no reply. At this moment, a pencil note from Arlington was brought to him, intreating to learn the place of his destination, as he had much to communicate, and wished to do so by letter.

Desbrow had only time to write a line, saying that he was returning directly to London, where a letter would find him, when the packet weighed anchor, and Lord Ayrshire and he, having taken a hurried adieu of Cecile and her father, left the ship.

It was perhaps well for Desbrow, that he had

to console Lord Ayrshire, who, in this parting with her whom he had so long considered as his child, felt the wound inflicted on his peace by the death of his excellent wife, bleed afresh; and Desbrow tried to forget all selfish feelings, in endeavouring to restore him to serenity.

The astonishment which the unaccountable apparition and manner of Arlington had excited, served also to divert his attention from his own regrets, and he and his friend pursued their route to town, there to await the promised communication from Arlington. A thousand vague fears flitted through the mind of Desbrow. Why was Arlington on board the packet, and *alone* with Lady Walmer, when he believed him married, or on the point of marriage, with Lady Emily?

All this seemed incomprehensible, and appeared still more so, when, on arriving in town, he found a letter from Arlington, which had been forwarded to him from the country, dated

ten days before, announcing that all was settled for his approaching nuptials, which were to take place in the course of the following week. A passage in this letter struck Desbrow forcibly; it was as follows—

"You were right, my dear friend, when you told me that my passion for Lady Walmer was an illusion which absence could not fail to destroy, as I should one day be ready to admit, when my heart became really sensible of the power of love. That moment has arrived, and I admit that you were right, for the sentiment Emily inspires, differs as wholly from the unhallowed passion I felt for Lady Walmer, as does Emily from that lady.

"I feel ready to attempt all that virtue could dictate, since I have loved Emily, as, alas! I was ready to execute the impulses of guilty passion, when I sighed for Lady Walmer.

"When you know Emily, you will think me one of the most fortunate of mortals; and you will not value her the less because she is the chosen friend of your Cecile, of whom she speaks nearly as warmly as you would do.

"We may well congratulate each other on the happy prospects that await us; but I must not forget, that to your counsel I owe my escape from the inglorious thraldom which enchained me in London, and might, nay, *would*, have precluded the union, which now is ready to crown my wishes."

When Desbrow had perused this letter, he was more than ever astonished at what even before appeared so unaccountable; and the more he reflected, the less could he explain the enigma. That something extraordinary had occurred, he felt certain; and that it was of a disagreeable and improper nature, was scarcely

less doubtful. "To-morrow," thought he, "must bring me a letter from Arlington, explanatory of all this, and until then, let me try to think as well of my friend as I can under such suspicious appearances."

The pale face and agitated manner of Arlington, were recalled to memory; and Desbrow pitied him, ere he knew what he had to pity.

CHAPTER XV.

"It is the nature of man, never to feel love so violently, as when circumstances arise to oppose his passion."

We left Arlington returning to his chamber, after his luckless interview with Lady Walmer. He had been but a few minutes absent from it, but what had he not suffered? and what a fearful effect was that brief period likely to exercise over his future destiny?

He threw himself into a chair, and looked around, as if to be sure that he was not in some frightful dream. There was every thing just as he had left them; a cheerful fire blazing,

and the pen not yet dry, with which he had written what he intended to be an eternal farewell to her who had caused all his unhappiness; but now, that object, for which he felt almost a dislike, had stepped between him and happiness, and he reflected with dismay that he might be condemned to the wretched fate of wearing out a dreary existence with her.

He shuddered at the thought, and at that moment, his glance fell on the portrait of Emily, placed before him on the table. Her dove-like eyes, seemed to look at him with that expression of affection and softness, which were their peculiar characteristic. The painter had caught the speaking look of her mouth, and had done justice to the extreme beauty of her countenance, which never struck Arlington with so profound a sense of admiration as at this moment, when he felt he had probably lost her for ever. Scattered about the table, were various little gifts of her's,

each, and all, endeared by some fond recollection. They brought a gush of tenderness to his heart, and Arlington, the hitherto gay, and happy Arlington, felt unable to resist the emotions that overpowered him, and for the first time since his childhood, wept with uncontrolable anguish.

All the confidential intercourse, and happy hours passed with Emily, seemed to flit before him; and then, came the thought,—the painful, mortifying thought,—that henceforth she would banish him from her heart, and never think of him but with disgust and dislike. At one moment, he determined to write to her, and tell her all, but after a little reflection, he asked himself,—Could he—dare he, sully her pure mind, with the revelation of his unhallowed entanglement with a married woman?—No; it was impossible. He then thought of writing to Lord Vavasour, and explaining the whole business to him; but,

ought he to expose to the condemnation of another, the unfortunate woman who had caused all this misery by her unhappy attachment to him? No! it was more his duty to screen and protect her; and painful,—wretched,—as the performance of that duty must render him, he would not shrink from it.

He attempted not to gloss over the horrors of his situation; they were all exposed to his view, and bitter were his feelings, as he contemplated their probable results. He expected every hour to receive a communication from Lady Walmer, and in this expectation, remained sunk in the chair into which he had thrown himself on entering the chamber.

More than once he fancied he had caught the sound of footsteps in the corridor, and he started with all the trembling anxiety of the culprit who expects to hear his doom pronounced. But again the sounds died away,

—all was silent,—and he sank back into his previous state of benumbing torpor.

At length, a thought flashed across his mind, —the letter he had written to Lady Walmer, and placed in her hand, she would be sure to read it,—would see how fondly, how wholly, he was devoted to another; and if she possessed but one spark of generosity, or feminine delicacy, she would not,—she could not, —accept the sacrifice which his being detected in her chamber had forced him to offer. No! she would fly his presence, rather than suffer him to partake her lot; she would return to her relations, and remain with them, leaving him free to devote his future life to his adored Emily. There was happiness,—there was rapture in the thought; and he blessed his stars for having written the letter.

Hour after hour rolled heavily away; and, at length, the sound of persons moving in the house was distinctly audible. In the next

minute, he heard a carriage driven to the door. His window commanding a view of the sweep in front of the entrance to the vestibule, he drew aside the curtains, and saw Lord Walmer enter the travelling carriage which had previously conveyed his suite; and then his valet de chambre having mounted the seat behind, it was driven away as rapidly as four post horses could whirl it.

This was death to his hopes, as it proved that all chance of explanation, or reconciliation, between the husband and wife was at an end. She was left,—abandoned,—deserted,—and *he,—he* was the cause of all this. His temples throbbed, and his head ached, almost to bursting; the blood seemed to recede from his heart, and to mount to his brain; he felt a sense of suffocation, that rendered the fresh air indispensable; and hastily changing his evening costume, for one more appropriate, he descended the stairs, and

rushed, rather than walked, into the pleasure-grounds.

It was one of those lovely, bright clear mornings, as rare as they are precious in our climate in winter; the dew drops gemmed the evergreen trees and shrubs, with which the grounds were thickly planted, and the bright hue of their verdure almost made one forget that it was not spring.

The sun rose in unclouded splendour; the dew drops, reflecting its rays, sent forth a thousand brilliant sparkles; the birds carolled their matin notes of joy, and all nature seemed to put on fresh charms, as if refreshed by night.

The freshness of the morning air, which fanned the forehead of Arlington, restored him to some degree of calmness; but when, on looking around at the beautiful and picturesque grounds, the thought that he was viewing them for the last time, presented itself to his mind; he felt, as did our first

parent when about to be driven from Paradise, and cast "his last lingering look behind."

At a sudden turn of a walk, Arlington almost ran against some person, and at a glance, discovered that it was Emily. He stood as if transfixed to the spot, scarcely able in the confusion and agitation of the moment, to reply to her mild, yet cordial greeting.

The gentle girl, with looks beaming with affection and confidence, placed her arm within his, as she had been wont to do; and asked him why he, who was in general not an early riser, was abroad at that unusual hour? "But, I suppose," she continued, "this delicious morning tempted you, as it did me, for I rarely venture out so soon, yet could not resist the impulse to stroll in the pleasure grounds, while yet the dew hangs trembling on the leaves and herbs. But surely you are ill!" said Emily, struck with the

change in Arlington's countenance; "your arm is tremulous, and your hand," laying her own small, white and dimpled one on his, "is quite feverish. I see, I know you are suffering," said she, all her tenderness excited by his evident indisposition; "let us return directly to the house, for indeed, dear Arlington, you are unfit to be abroad.

Her tenderness produced a violent revulsion in Arlington; his frame trembled, tears gushed to his eyes, and, no longer master of himself, he grasped the hands of Emily, and fixing his looks on her face, he passionately exclaimed,

"Emily, dear, adored Emily! if this, should be our last meeting, let me have the consolation, the only one that now awaits me, of carrying with me the persuasion that you are convinced, that *you*,—and *you only*,—have ever been, can ever be,—loved by me! Oh! let me implore you, however appearances may be

against me, never to let this conviction pass from your mind!

It instantly occurred to Emily, that he referred to the scene of the song, two nights before, with Lady Walmer, when she had shewn that she was distressed by it. Turning therefore to Arlington, she assured him, with all the warmth of her gentle nature, that she doubted not, never could doubt, his love; and intreated him to be convinced that he had her whole confidence.

Overcome by this display of her affection, and feeling how selfish, how cruel it was in him, under existing circumstances, to search to retain an interest in her heart, when it would so soon become her duty to banish him from it, he turned wildly from her, then pausing a moment, he seized her hand, and after passionately pressing it to his lips, abruptly hurried away; leaving the amiable girl, shocked and affected at his visible perturbation, which

she wholly attributed to some violent and sudden attack of fever.

Arlington flew, rather than ran, to the house, and reached his chamber without encountering any of the family, Lord and Lady Vavasour not having yet left theirs'. On his table, he found the following note, from Lady Walmer, and he tore it open almost with loathing:—

"My doom is sealed;—Lord Walmer has left me, and for ever; and too well do I know the hearts of those who have called themselves my friends, to doubt that they will turn from the disgraced and ruined wife, with even more alacrity than they sought her in her prosperous days. I cannot, dare not, face that world, whose idol I have so long been.

"I wish to quit England for ever. Am I to count on you as my friend and protector? or will you, like the rest of those who have

flattered and lured me to destruction, leave me to the ruin you have brought on my head? I shall go to ———, the third post from this, where I shall wait your presence, or your answer."

Every line of this letter, excited fresh disgust in the mind of Arlington; the selfishness of the writer was so apparent, that he groaned in spirit when he reflected that the laws of honour compelled him to give his protection to, and to pass his future days with her. How did he execrate the artificial state of society, which forged such laws,—laws equally opposed to religion and morality, yet the violation of which, would stamp him as a man who had deserted the woman he had ruined.

Had Lady Walmer read the letter he had addressed to her? was the next thought of Arlington. If she had, and yet could continue to claim his protection, she must be in-

deed lost to every feeling of delicacy; and if she had not, and still counted on his affection, how dreadful must be her anguish whenever she chanced to discover this written proof of his indifference to herself, and strong love for another.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Those who make the opinion of the world the criterion of their conduct, are but too apt to neglect the dictates of religion and conscience."

On entering the house, he discovered, from his valet de chambre, that Lady Walmer had left the house during his absence from it; and this was some relief to his feelings, but how was *he* to leave it? and what excuse could he give? He would feign having received letters demanding his immediate presence in London.

No sooner had he formed this plan, than a note from Lord Vavasour, desiring to see him

in the library, again threw him into a state of fresh agitation. He felt like a culprit going to receive his sentence of condemnation, as he entered the scene of so many happy hours; and the unusual sternness and severity depicted on the brow of Lord Vavasour, proclaimed that Arlington in him was to find no unprejudiced judge.

A cold bow was the only mark of recognition Arlington met; he, who had been accustomed to be greeted by smiles and cordial shakes of the hand by Lord Vavasour. The difference shocked him, though he was prepared for a painful scene, by his consciousness of the thoroughly unworthy aspect under which his conduct must appear to the eyes of another.

"I have sent for you, Lord Arlington, on a most distressing subject," said Lord Vavasour, "but our relative situations render a frank explanation necessary, and give me the right of demanding it; though when your lord-

ship will have read the letter I now place in your hands, you will, perhaps, think no explanation necessary, as, unfortunately, that seems to render excuse impossible."

Thus saying, he presented to Arlington a letter, written that morning by Lord Walmer, previous to his departure, detailing the scene of the night before, in the dressing-room of his wife, with his determination of never more seeing her; adding, that he thought it a duty to inform Lord Vavasour of the shameful conduct of the affianced husband of his daughter, who, when within a few days of marriage with her, and beneath the same roof, could so far violate all the laws of delicacy, morals, and religion, as to be found concealed in the apartment of a married woman; a conduct, he asserted, which left no room for doubt, or need for comment.

Lord Walmer went on to state, how much he felt grieved, that this scandalous proceeding should have taken place beneath the roof of

Lord Vavasour, whose hospitality and confidence had been so shamefully abused.

Arlington perused this letter with varying and conflicting emotions: the truth of the allegations he could not refute: his pride and delicacy were deeply wounded, yet he shrank from even attempting to exculpate himself, at the expense of the woman who had caused all this misery.

His silence, his agitation, and, above all, the expression of deep wretchedness imprinted on his countenance, excited a feeling of pity in the generous heart of Lord Vavasour, which quelled the angry emotions that had previously reigned there.

He saw the struggle of Arlington, as he endeavoured to speak, and, in a kinder tone, he suggested, that perhaps he might prefer writing. Overcome by this change of manner, Arlington, no longer able to suppress his feelings, stated the whole case to Lord Vavasour; he dwelt,

with candour, on his former reprehensible passion for Lady Walmer, and on the pains he had taken to excite a return in her breast; he related how, influenced by the counsel of Desbrow, he had fled from London to avoid her, and how his whole heart having become devoted to Lady Emily, she had driven every other image from his mind. Here, overpowered by the intensity of his feelings, the big drops burst from his eyes, while Lord Vavasour, touched by what he had heard, and what he saw, held out his hand to him, and uttered a few words of kindness.

Arlington endeavoured to recover some degree of composure, while he stated all that had occurred between Lady Walmer and himself since her arrival. He thought that on such an occasion it would be no breach of confidence, to shew her note, which he had forgotten to destroy, and related the contents of that which

he had written in answer, with the intention of leaving it at her dressing-room door, when the arrival of Lord Walmer led to the fearful denoument already described.

Lord Vavasour, who had lived too long in the gay world, and partaken too much of its follies and vices, to feel as much shocked as perhaps a father ought to have felt on such an occasion, was more inclined to pity than condemn Arlington.

All his censure was directed to Lady Walmer, on whose conduct he passed a severe and justly merited condemnation, but with a generosity only to be appreciated, by taking into consideration, the more than distaste,—the positive antipathy,—with which he now regarded that unhappy woman. Arlington intreated his forbearance, and reminded him that it was the professions of attachment, and the constant attentions, which he had

lavished towards her some months before, that had engaged her affection,—an affection which now would be the bane of his life.

"I have brought this misery on myself," said Arlington, "and if I only were to suffer, I should bear it as a man; but, when I reflect how it involves the happiness of others, I sink before the blow.—Lady Walmer claims my protection; it is the only amends I can make her for having deprived her of fame, home, and consideration. Can I, therefore, whatever the effort costs me, refuse to make it?"

"This is madness, folly," replied Lord Vavasour; "*she*, and she alone, has induced this catastrophe. As yet too, she is unstained, save by levity and indelicacy, both of which appear to me much more visible in her conduct than affection. Your protection, therefore, as you call it, will only plunge you both into actual guilt; and had she a particle of virtue, would she not prefer enjoying the consolation of hav-

ing sinned only in appearance, to claiming a sacrifice from you, which must set the seal of reprobation on both? Go not to her; let her seek her family, who cannot abandon her at such a crisis: with them, or even alone, she will be more protected than she can be by you; for the protection which a lover offers to a married woman, so far from being one, only points her out as an adultress, and forfeits for ever her last claim to respectability. I talk not to you of the matter in a religious or moral point of view," continued Lord Vavasour; "because, unfortunately, religion and morals, which ought to be our guides, in such cases, are seldom considered; and worldly wisdom is the standard by which most men are influenced: but, in all points of view, let me intreat you not to add guilt to imprudence. Avoid this woman, for her sake as well as your own, and all may yet be well."

"But can I refuse the protection she

claims? Can I desert her who has lost all for my sake?"

"If she had yielded to your seduction, and abandoned her home for you, I grant that, according to the received usage on such occasions,—nay, more, according to humanity, you could not desert the woman you had ruined. But this is a totally different case,—you fled from her, to save her and yourself;—she followed you, and you still resisted her arts. For now that you have told me your passed position with her, I must say, that her conduct since she entered beneath my roof, has been as unfeeling as it has been indelicate. She inveigles you to her dressing-room; you are surprised there, by her husband, and the consequences are, that he casts her from him: but are you to condemn yourself to a life of misery and guilt, because you have been weak enough to temporize with her during the last three days;

when, had you shewn more firmness, all this esclandre would have been saved."

"True, true," groaned, rather than said, Arlington, "and never shall I forgive myself for my folly, my infatuation! Why did I not openly shew her, that my whole soul was devoted to another, and thus check, at once, every display or indication of her fatal partiality? Still I owe her reparation; and, however painful is the task of making it, I must submit."

"While you are thinking so much of what is due to the feelings of this unworthy woman, you seem to have totally forgotten those of my daughter," said Lord Vavasour, angrily, "whose affections you have engaged, and whose hand would have been your's, in a few brief days. What will be the feelings of my pure minded and innocent child, when she learns that the man with whom she hoped to pass her life, has

fled with an adultress, and is living in sin and shame."

"Oh! name it not, if you would not drive me mad," said Arlington; "I see,—I feel,—all the wretchedness I have caused; and dare not contemplate it."

"Can you then hesitate," asked Lord Vavasour, "which you will doom to suffer;—the young and spotless girl, who looks on you as her affianced husband, or the practised coquette, who, spider like, has spun her web round you until, like a helpless fly, you are entangled and destroyed. If you had a particle of affection for this worthless woman, you should have no remonstrances from me, as I should consider you unworthy of them; but, seeing you are only actuated by a misjudged sense of honour, I would save you ere yet it be too late. Write to Lady Walmer, and refer her to the letter you placed in her hands, for a knowledge of your real sen-

timents;—as those sentiments were expressed before she was compromised with her husband, she cannot doubt their sincerity, or expect that the detection, caused by her own impropriety, ought to produce any change in them. She cannot, after such a letter, demand you to fly with her, and, if she could, it would prove her too selfish and unworthy to be entitled even to pity."

Arlington's heart was so wholly devoted to Lady Emily, that he was ready to adopt any line of conduct consistent with honour, that could preserve him the inestimable boon of her hand.

He, therefore, sat down to write to Lady Walmer, and with all the delicacy and generosity he so eminently possessed, after explaining his feelings, offered to divide his fortune with her, nay, to lay the whole of it at her feet; but that the affection he entertained for an-

other, as well as his religious and moral sentiments, must, for ever, preclude his giving her his personal protection.

He had nearly concluded his letter, when a courier arrived, bringing him the painful intelligence of the sudden and dangerous illness of his father, who was seized by severe indisposition at Boulogne, on his return from a visit to the French capital, whence he was hurrying, to be present at the nuptials of his son.

He hastily closed his letter, adding a line, to state that he was setting off to join Lord Heatherfield; and, having dispatched it, took an affectionate, but agitated, leave of Lady Emily, her father, and mother; and was, in half an hour from the courier's reaching him, on his route to Dover.

Lady Emily believed, that the agitation Arlington had betrayed, in their interview in the pleasure grounds, had been caused by his anxiety about his parent, and his regret at their

approaching separation; and her tenderness for him was enhanced by this, as she considered it new proof of his affection for her.

Lord Vavasour hoped, that she might never learn the scene of the night before, and carefully concealed all knowledge of it from his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

"En ce qu'on appelle fantaisie, amour, passion, on sait d'ou l'on part, mais on ignore toujours où l'on arrivera."

Soon after Lady Walmer had written, as already stated, to Arlington, in looking for something in her writing-case, the letter he had put into her hand the night before, and which, from the agitation she had ever since endured, had escaped her recollection, now met her view. She had thrown it into the writing-case, when Lord Walmer knocked at the door, and, now, having recognised the writing, she opened it. Rage, jealousy, wounded va-

nity, all rose up at the perusal of each line. Had she then compromised herself for ever, for a man who thought only of another, and who avowed, even to her, the deep love that other had inspired? Dreadful was the hurricane of passion that now devastated the ill-governed mind of this unhappy woman; tears, burning tears of anger and mortification, chased each other in torrents down her cheeks, as she mentally vowed that her innocent rival should not triumph over her; and that, if she could not command the affection of Arlington, she would, at least, never relinquish the right which she considered the detection of her misconduct, gave her to his protection; and with the base selfishness, that belongs but to the weak and the wicked, she determined to exact what she now knew must be the most painful sacrifice from him, namely, his accompanying her to some foreign land, where she hoped her shame might remain unwitnessed, at least, by those who

had hitherto composed her world, and whose altered looks she dared not encounter.

The opinion of that world had been the ordeal by which Lady Walmer had always guided her own conduct, and judged that of others; the impropriety, or sinfulness of an action had never been taken into consideration, and her conscience had so long slumbered, that its powers had become inert, and its whispers silenced.

What will the world think of it? was the only question that ever suggested itself to her mind; and her's was not a heart to be consoled by conscious innocence. If the clique, she denominated the world, chose to turn their backs on her,—a measure she knew them too well to doubt could not fail to occur, the moment her husband cast her from him,—her reputation as a woman of honour, and fashion,—terms not always synonymous,—was irretrievably lost; for she felt that Lord Walmer

would not hesitate to denounce her. All therefore, she could hope was, that in case of a divorce, a sense of honour might induce Lord Arlington to give her his name, and that in a foreign land she might take that place in society, which in England she could no longer expect to fill. All feeling of partiality for Arlington was now obliterated from her heart, because the vanity that governed that heart, had been wounded by his preference for another; but, in proportion to her indifference for him, became her fixed determination to attach him to her for life, by throwing herself on his generosity, and high—though perhaps, false,—sense of honour; and thus, attain the end which love could never have accomplished. She conned over the scene which she meant to enact when he arrived; for of his arrival, she allowed herself not to doubt, as she read over and over again, the few lines he had placed on her table, before leaving her dressing-room,

in which he offered to share the misfortune he had been the unwilling cause of drawing on her.

"I will never confess to him," said this heartless, and coarse-minded woman, "that I have read the letter he brought to my door; I will pretend that in the agitation of the moment, I threw it into the fire; and when he comes, I will affect to take for granted that he still feels for me the same tenderness he professed a few months ago."

It is shocking to reflect to how many meannesses,—nay, crimes,—vanity may urge its votaries: to have it made apparent to the world, that Lord Arlington's affection for her had triumphed over his engagement to the young and beautiful Lady Emily, Lady Walmer stooped to deception and artifice, and quelled the angry feelings of her heart to enact the part of a loving and ruined woman, who had sacrificed all to affection.

Calculating the time that Lord Arlington would arrive, she made a studied toilette for his reception. Her beautiful hair was suffered to fall in confusion over the fair cheeks no longer tinged by rouge; her lustrous eyes were taught to assume a woe-fraught expression, and her graceful person lost none of its delicate proportions, in the elegant dishabille in which it was attired.

Hour after hour passed, and still Arlington arrived not; at length came the letter already known to our readers, the perusal of which threw Lady Walmer into paroxysms of rage and despair. When the first ebullitions of her anger were over, she gave instant orders for post horses, and set out for Dover, pursuing her route night and day, in the hope of overtaking Lord Arlington. Half dead with fatigue, she arrived there, at seven o'clock in the morning, and learned that the steam-packet was to sail at ten. Ascertaining that Arlington was not at the inn where she stopped, she

sent to the other, and discovered that he had arrived a few hours before, and was to embark in the vessel to sail that day. Her plans were instantly formed. She ordered a passage to be secured for herself and servants; and sent her carriage and luggage on board immediately. Then, having in some degree refreshed herself by a bath and an hour's repose, she left the inn at the appointed time, enveloped in a mantle and large shawl, her face concealed by a deep bonnet and veil, and, leaning on the arm of her femme de chambre, proceeded to the pier. In a few minutes she saw Arlington arrive, and she contrived to enter the vessel the moment after he did.

Finding a lady close to him, without any male assistant to hand her over the luggage that impeded her steps, he offered her his hand, and had only touched her's when she fell into his arms fainting, or rather affecting to faint. He supported her, and assisted to lift her veil

to give her air, when to his horror and dismay, he recognised in the insensible form in his arms, the woman he least expected,—least desired,—to behold on earth. He felt as if his destiny was sealed; he turned with loathing from her, and humanity alone prevented his leaving her to the care of her maid, and the few persons around who were assisting her. She soon opened her eyes, and fixing them on him, exclaimed, "The surprise, —the joy was too much for me; don't leave me for a moment, dear Arlington, or I shall expire."

He was supporting her to the cabin, when he met Desbrow and his party; the embrace of Cecile, and the being mistaken for Lady Emily, was too much for the exhausted frame of Lady Walmer, and she now really suffered, what she had before merely affected, a faintness that nearly overcame her.

To paint the feelings of Arlington would be

impossible; he saw that his presence with Lady Walmer, under existing circumstances, must stamp conviction on the minds of Desbrow and his party, that she was under his protection, and must confirm every evil report respecting them. He knew that Mademoiselle de Bethune was the confidential friend of Lady Emily, and he felt the blush of shame mount to his cheek when he thought of her, and Lord Vavasour, hearing that he was thus publicly appearing with the woman to whom, only a few hours before, he had written to bid an eternal farewell. Who would—who could believe that the rencontre on board the packet was totally unexpected on his part?

All these thoughts passed through his mind, filling it by turns, with anger, indignation, and sorrow, as he sat in his carriage on deck, having refused to attend to the thrice repeated

summons of Lady Walmer to descend to the cabin.

Cecile remained on deck with her father, her tearful eyes often cast back to the white cliffs of England, where lay all her hopes, and her reflections little interrupted by the observations of the comte, who lamented that they had not sailed in one of the French packets, as their superiority over the English, in all respects, was, as he said, incontestible. Luckily, his observations were expressed in his native language, otherwise he would have found many of those around disposed to contradict, though incapable of convincing, him; he having made up his mind that every *thing French* must be infinitely superior to every thing English, and as unalterably determined never to conceal this liberal opinion. He repeatedly assured Cecile, that the nautical terms he heard passing around among the

sailors, were barbarous, and grated on his ear; whereas in French, they were sonorous and harmonious.

Cecile could not resist observing, that this must arise from his ignorance of the language, for, as England had ever been mistress of the sea, the maritime terms must be analogous to the element to which they related.

She touched on a tender subject, for the comte instantly and angrily told her, that he denied, and should always deny, that her favourite nation were masters of the sea, as the French were always as ready to dispute the English rule over that wide domain, as they had ever been to meet them on the land, where the prowess of his countrymen had gained them such unequalled and undeniable renown.

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